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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

USE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Some Reflections on the Strawson-Russell Controversy

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In his controversy with B. Russell, P.F. Strawson (in "On Referring") makes a crucial distinction between expressions and sentences (as mere marks on paper) and statements (propositions). Strawson claims that, contrary to the belief of Russell, only sentences and expressions are significant. They are significant not because they represent anything (The Correspondence Theory of Meaning) but because they are used and because there are rules for using them to refer and state ('Use' Theory of Meaning).

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore further the relation between 'use' and 'significance'. It is suggested that the concept of 'use' is intended to explain how words are significant by means of an analogy with tools. But, as I argue in Chapter 4, there are certain difficulties with the explanation by analogy with tools.

It is also argued in this thesis (Chapter 3) that when Strawson says one couldn't say true or false to Russell's example 'The present king of France is wise', he was putting an unfair interpretation on it.

Chapter 1 is an expository chapter dealing with aspects of the Strawson-Russell Controversy. Chapter 2 is mainly elucidatory and preparatory for Chapter 4.

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INTRODUCTION

- 0.11 John Passmore⁽¹⁾ calls Strawson's "On Referring"⁽²⁾ the 'locus-classicus' of the debate between 'Ordinary Language' philosophers and their predecessors and present antagonists. Passmore says further that Strawson's article is "an irreverent attack on that sacred doctrine of the formalists, Russell's theory of descriptions".
- 0.12 The main theory of descriptions was first put forward by Bertrand Russell in his article "On Denoting" published in MIND in 1905.⁽³⁾ This article has been called a "paradigm of philosophy", and despite criticisms, it remains one of the landmarks of philosophy. It is not surprising, then, that some philosophers have come to the defence of the theory of descriptions. Not the least of these is Russell himself, who, in 1957,⁽⁴⁾ in MIND, said that he could see no validity whatsoever in any of Strawson's arguments. The continuing debate between those who defend Russell, and those who side with Strawson, I shall, hereafter, call The Strawson-Russell Controversy.
- 0.13 The controversy hangs around the account to be given for the significance of the proposition⁽⁵⁾ 'The present king of France is wise'. Although it is not certain what was the actual basis⁽⁶⁾ for his account we may say, for the time being, that Russell attempted to solve the problem of how the proposition is significant by translating it into a conjunction of the following propositions: 'There

is at least one king of France', 'There is at most one king of France', and 'Whoever is the king of France is wise'. The first of these, an existential proposition, is false; thus, the original proposition is false. Strawson seems to be interpreting Russell as saying that the original is significant because it is true or false.

0.14 Strawson denies that we can pronounce the proposition true or false today simply because the truth or falsity of the proposition does not (cannot?) arise today (in the twentieth century). In ordinary language you would not say true or false to it. It is significant because there are rules for using it, because it is used, it could be used, or because one can imagine uses for it. Propositions are not significant but sentences and expressions, as mere marks on paper, are. One of Russell's main errors was his saying that propositions are significant. Another, and more basic mistake, was his erroneous theory of meaning (objects in the world are the meanings of words - The Correspondence Theory of Meaning). Strawson's theory may be called the "Use" Theory of Meaning, or The Functional Theory of Meaning.

0.2 In one of my concerns in this thesis, I argue that Russell may be justified under some interpretations. I suggest that when Strawson says that Russell was wrong in pronouncing 'The present king of France is wise' as true or false,⁽⁷⁾ Strawson's claim was based on an unfair interpretation of the proposition in question. I want to suggest that Russell may have wanted to regard the proposition as

an Empirical Hypothesis⁽⁸⁾ and did not intend that it should be interpreted like, and assimilated to, (odd) cases like 'Have you stopped beating your wife'⁽⁹⁾ etc., i.e., it is supposed by Russell that there is at least one person who believes that there is a king of France and/or a group of people who believe so. The question of truth or falsity can arise, on a favorable interpretation, i.e., if we assimilate it to cases like, 'The ether retards the velocity of light'.

0.31 In my main concern in this thesis, however, I am not interested in siding with Russell but rather with trying to find out how, according to Strawson, sentences, as marks on paper, are significant.⁽¹⁰⁾ For, one of the important things Strawson takes Russell to task for, is his failure to realize that it is sentences and expressions (as mere marks on paper) that are significant. Russell, Strawson says, has made a category-error⁽¹¹⁾ in failing to distinguish between what we can say true or false of (statements or propositions) and what we can say significant of (expressions and sentences as mere marks on paper).

0.32 How are sentences and expressions significant?⁽¹²⁾ It is not entirely clear how Strawson answers this question for at one place he says that meaning is a function of use,⁽¹³⁾ at another place he says that significance is a set of rules of use,⁽¹⁴⁾ and at still another place he says that if you were to ask for the meaning of an expression you would be asking for directions for its use.⁽¹⁵⁾

0.33 The concept of use was introduced into philosophy by Wittgenstein⁽¹⁶⁾

as a way of getting around the problems of the Correspondence Theory of Meaning,⁽¹⁷⁾ one form of which Russell undoubtedly held⁽¹⁸⁾ and which Strawson ridicules by saying that when you ask for the meaning of the word 'handkerchief' you don't produce the meaning out of your pocket.⁽¹⁹⁾

0.4 The main part of this thesis consists in exploring the relationship between "significance" and "use", i.e., how does Strawson answer the question: How are sentences and expressions (used as mere marks on paper) significant? I suggest various possible ways in which Strawson might have wanted to clarify how sentences are significant by an appeal to use. First, I suggest, he defines⁽²⁰⁾ the relationship. But as a definition there are objections to it either as an identification, a stipulation or a reportive discovery⁽²¹⁾ of what people say they mean by significance. Next, I explore the relation as a criterion⁽²²⁾ i.e., the appeal to use is in terms of a criterion to distinguish between significant and non-significant expressions. But there are difficulties here also.

0.51 Finally, I suggest that what is offered is, in some way, an explanation⁽²³⁾ of how sentences and expressions, as mere marks on paper, are significant. As an explanation it seems best to interpret it as being analogical⁽²⁴⁾ i.e., sentences and expressions are used as other objects are used (e.g., as hand-tools like knives are used). It seems obvious how these other "tools" are used; and since they are so familiar no account of how they are significant seems necessary. At least Strawson seems to take this for granted and gives no further account of how things used are supposed to be significant.

(Gilbert Ryle⁽²⁵⁾ does give some account, however.)

0.52 But I don't think this sort of implicit explanation should be taken for granted so easily. For one thing, one may claim that the analogs are not familiar; and, even though they were (as knives, hammers, etc.), still some people may claim that they were not clear about their use or their significance. One may ask, further: Are words like tools? If so, in what way? How are tools significant? Are tools significant in the same way words are? What is meant by use? What is meant by significance? The exploration of these questions forms the main contribution of this thesis.

0.61 To take the last question first: What is meant by significance? With some misgiving, I suggest that the only plausible interpretation is, in some vague way, in terms of perceptual and cognitive understanding. When someone says that objects used, mere marks on paper, are significant, it seems to me that the only way one can reasonably interpret "significant" is in some such way as "understandable".⁽²⁶⁾ Strawson has not drawn any psychological and epistemological implications as Gilbert Ryle⁽²⁷⁾ has, but it is not unreasonable to think that the implications of Strawson's account would not differ in any radical way.

0.62 What is meant by use? There is considerable ambiguity in the concept; for when we try to substitute values for X in 'to use X', we find a great variety of possible substituends (in ordinary language) and no clear criterion of choice. Further, there is much assimilation⁽²⁸⁾ of different concepts: "use", "function", "role", "job"

are used almost interchangeably but such assimilation can only lead to confusion in the reader. Finally, there is a misleading assimilation of two opposed views of language--language as medium and language as instrument. The latter is suggested as the one intended by Strawson.

- 0.63 In its most general form, the main objection to the explanation by analogy may be considered (only) as a theoretical objection⁽²⁹⁾ possible for many other analogies also. For, insofar as the analogs are simple and uncomplicated (as knives, hammers, etc. are), the explanatory value of the analogy is vitiated; for, the analog is much too simple and much too different in structure, function and manner of understanding to be of real value in explaining how words are significant (i.e., how we understand language). (To illustrate the difficulty with a (perhaps poor) example: It is not helpful to explain how a motor-car works by comparing it to a bicycle. A bicycle may be more familiar and more uncomplicated but the analogy would not clarify the important and novel aspects of a car, i.e., the engine). On the other hand, if the analog is money the analog is much too similar to sentences and expressions, thus making it possible to ask some of the same troubling questions as one asks about sentences and expressions. As Samuel Butler⁽³⁰⁾ once suggested, there are counterfeit words as there is counterfeit money. People may buy and sell cows that are non-existent. How is it, we may ask a la Meinong, that we can make transactions about such things? Thus money may be in as much need of elucidation as

Conch - shells?

words and expressions. (There is usually writing on money, anyway.) In the case of the motor-car, one may attempt to explain how a Ford car works by saying that it is like a Dodge car. This can't be too helpful since a Ford and a Dodge are almost identical. The one needs as much explaining as the other.

0.64 It must be emphasized that this objection was not imposed, like a formula, on the analogy. Rather, it was suggested by, and "discovered" from, the detailed attempt to try out the analogy with as many kinds of things used as possible (at least the ones suggested by ordinary language philosophers themselves). The questions raised about Strawson's explanation of how sentences and expressions are significant were explored in detail in terms of the analogs--hand-tools (knives, chisels, etc.), chess-pieces, and money. The general theoretical objection mentioned in the previous paragraph was a generalization from observing these separate analogs.

0.65 I will give an example-sketch of the detailed examination of the analogy between "words" and "knives" by posing a few questions.

- a. Structure
 - 1. In what sense are the shapes, weights, etc. comparable? Can we have a two-dimensional knife?
 - 2. Are there homonyms and synonyms for knives also?
 - 3. Are there vague, ambiguous or unclear knives?
 - 4. Are there knife-types as Strawson's sentence types?
- b. Function
 - 1. In what sense is cutting paper similar to referring?
 - 2. Can you cut something that does not exist as you can refer to something that does not exist?
 - 3. Does referring to something affect it any way as cutting it does?

4. In what sense does the use of knives depend on rules, or conventions of use? Are these social, logical, or natural rules? Are they discovered by statistical or intuitive or other means?
5. Are the misuses of knives anything like the misuses of words?
6. May not knife-using and symbol-using be entire disjoint categories? Are they in any way relevant to one another?

c. Intelligibility

(Significance?

Understandability?)

1. Are there non-significant uses of knives? Does it make sense at all to say knives are significant? Intelligible? What factors are involved? Cultural, anthropological, psychological?
2. Do we "know" the use of (significance, meaning?) of knives in the same way as we "know" the use of words?
3. Do we need rules to understand the use of words?
4. Can all who can use knives also use words?
5. Is the use of tools in general dependent merely on habits, "drills and skills" as Ryle says? Or does it require some intellectual "insight" as Gestalt-psychologists say? What is meant by "training"?
6. Is language-ability (symbol-making) assimilable to hand-tool-using-ability?

I think the answers to the questions are such that one must entertain grave doubts about the adequacy of the analogy to "explain" how words are significant. Hand-tools are very elementary instruments which even some chimpanzees can use. Language, on the other hand, is a rather sophisticated thing, and if it is to be explained at all, it cannot be assimilated to either the use or intelligibility of hand-tools.

0.66 Similarly, it can be argued that money is much too much like words.

0.7 The general conclusion reached at the end of this (tedious) inquiry

is that it is difficult to see how the concept of use elucidates the concept of significance. If one were to relate this conclusion to the general theories of meaning, such as the one Russell is supposed to have held and about which Strawson is so condescending (the Correspondence Theory), one is inclined to think that even if Strawson is justified in taking Russell to task, his own theory (Functional?) is not as clear as one would wish it to be.

0.8 At the end of this introduction, it should be pointed out that there are many serious handicaps that a student of the field of the philosophy of language must face. For one thing the key terms like "significant", "sentence", "use", etc. are not clear. For another, it is most often not clear what the questions at stake are (as will be shown in Chapter 2). For, formulations are interpretable in many different directions.⁽³¹⁾ If the questions are unclear, the answers are not much better. For implications and interpretations are even more varied here. There doesn't seem to be any settled criteria for deciding between answers. Nor is methodology clear.⁽³²⁾ For instance, when Strawson says such and such "does not arise", what is his method for finding out this? It is hoped, however, considering the situation, that the burden of this thesis, is, at least, not irrelevant and further, that the general drift of the arguments are of interest, even though the contribution itself lies merely in pointing out that all may not be clear in one contemporary point of view in the philosophy of language.⁽³³⁾

CHAPTER I

THE STRAWSON-RUSSELL CONTROVERSY

1.0 Introduction.

1.01 The Question as stated by Strawson

As Strawson frames it, the question that Russell (and presumably Meinong and Frege, also) faced was this:

One of the questions the Theory of Descriptions was designed to answer was the question: How can such a sentence as "The present king of France is wise" be significant even when there is nothing which answers to the description "The king of France"?⁽¹⁾

1.02 The Interpretation of the Question

The interpretation of the question presents considerable difficulty although it may seem quite straightforward as stated above. We may want to ask the following questions:

(1) How much hangs on the particular example? Is the particular example supposed to be an empirical hypothesis, a sentence in a story, a timeless proposition, a joke, or something else? As we will see later, these questions are very important for interpreting the various answers given.

(2) In what sense of "how"? For what answer is expected? What answers are possible? Is a logical, semantical, 'ad hoc', epistemological or ontological answer required? As we will see later, much trouble has been caused by lack of clarity in the question.

(3) What is meant by "significant"? Does it mean "makes sense", "intelligible", "understandable", "meaningful" or "has a meaning"? The problem of what "significant" means and the problem of what is meant by the question are closely related. For we are tempted to interpret the question epistemologically if we mean by "significant" understandable or intelligible, and thus explore the question in one direction. On the other hand, if "significant" were to be taken as meaning "makes sense" we may be merely concerned with a semantical elucidation of possible interpretations of it. Finally, we don't know whether Strawson is interpreting the word "significant" like Schlick and other positivists and thus seeking a solution like theirs or in some other way. The word is not even used by Russell in 1905 in "On Denoting". In any case, Strawson himself attempts to answer the more general question: How are sentences and expressions significant?

1.1 Russell and Meinong

1.11 Meinong's Theory (as interpreted by Strawson and Russell)

As evidence for his theory, Russell claims that it avoids the difficulty Meinong's theory is guilty of. Strawson⁽²⁾ represents Meinong as arguing as follows:

- (1) Only sentences with subjects that refer, are significant.
- (2) The sentence "The present king of France is wise" is significant.
- (3) Therefore its subject must refer.

(4) But "the present king of France" does not exist in the empirical world.

(5) Therefore he must exist in some other type of world (i.e., he must exist in a mental world).

(6) That is why the sentence is significant.

1.12 Why Russell rejected Meinong's Theory

Russell accepts some sort of interpretation like this for he says that Meinong's theory "regards any grammatically correct denoting phrase as standing for an object".⁽³⁾ Russell objects to Meinong's theory on several grounds. One of these is that it is a "difficult view".⁽³⁾ He argues explicitly that it leads to a contradiction. For Meinong would be arguing thus:

(1) The present king of France does not exist.

(2) The king of France (in some sense) does exist.

Therefore (3) The present king of France does not exist and
(in some sense) does.⁽⁴⁾

Russell, at other places, claims that even in philosophy we should preserve a sense for reality and also that we should not multiply entities unnecessarily. We may comment here that Russell (and Strawson also) has done less than justice to Meinong. For both Russell and Strawson have represented Meinong as giving a linguistic argument, i.e., the postulation of abstract entities is a result of grammatical necessity.

1.13 But the interpretation of Meinong may not be fair

But, as I understand it, the postulation of abstract entities was

motivated more as a result of the failure of Empiricism (as held by Locke and later by Lotze and Wundt) to account for mathematical and logical entities than a merely grammatical error. I will discuss this matter further in Chapter 2.⁽⁵⁾ Russell's true bases for the rejection of Meinong's view seem to be that the view was difficult (i.e., complicated?) and that entities are multiplied unnecessarily. Meinong would not easily accept the argument that his views are contradictory for he states clearly at various places that "exist" and "subsist" are not intended to be contradictory (but of this I will deal further in Chapter 2).

1.2 Russell and Frege

1.21 Frege's first claim

Another attempt to deal with the problem was thought inadequate by Russell. Frege had attempted to solve the problem in at least two ways. In one place Frege suggested that sentences without subjects should be regarded as referring to the null-class⁽⁶⁾. Russell rejected this solution because he thought it was too artificial:

But this procedure though it may not lead to actual logical error is plainly artificial, and does not give an exact analysis of the matter.⁽⁷⁾

1.22 Frege's second claim

Frege had something else to say about such propositions as "the present king of France is wise". He said that they are a "defect

in language" and that they should be avoided by "special convention":

Now it is a defect in languages that expressions are possible within them, which, in their grammatical form, seemingly determined to designate an object, nevertheless do not fulfill this in special cases; because this depends on the truth of the sentence... This can be avoided by special convention... It is to be demanded in a logically perfect language (logical symbolism) every expression constructed as a proper name in a grammatically correct manner out of already introduced symbols, in fact designate an object, and that no symbol be introduced as a proper name without assurance that it have a nomination. (8)

Frege claims also that:

Whenever something is asserted then the presupposition taken for granted is that the employed proper names, simple or compound, have nominata. Thus if we assert "Kepler died in misery" it is presupposed that Kepler designates something. (9)

Presumably Russell would say to this notion also that it is artificial, but he doesn't express any view on this matter. (It is to be noticed that Strawson also has a notion of presupposition.) Finally, Russell argues against Frege's distinction between sense and nomination. (10) The result of Russell's claim that no practical distinction can be made between sense and nomination is that Russell can claim that a sentence like "The author of Waverley is Scotch" is not a tautology as Frege would claim.

1.3 Russell's own solution

1.31 The sentence is significant

What does Russell himself claim? Russell says that the sentence is significant, as both Frege and Meinong are supposed to believe also. He says:

Now it is plain that such propositions do not become nonsense merely because their hypotheses are false. (11)

He claims that the sentence is to be interpreted differently. (At least this is one thing that he claimed). Both Meinong and Frege had assumed erroneously that "The present king of France" is a grammatical subject like "Louis XXVII". Thus they were led to suppose that some sort of referent must be provided.

Russell saw an alternative:

Thus we must either provide a denotation in cases in which it is at first sight absent, or we must abandon the view that the denotation is what is concerned in propositions which concern denoting phrases. (12)

1.32 Russell's Theory

The theory that Russell proposed was that denoting phrases of the form "The so and so" are not logically proper subjects. They are complex existential claims. Their logical equivalent is a compound of two propositions:

- (1) There exists at least one so and so, and
- (2) There exists at most one so and so.

Thus 'The present king of France is wise' becomes: 'There is at least one king of France', and 'There is at most one king of France', and 'Whoever is the king of France is wise'. Since the first of these is false, the conjunction of all three is also false. It is not clear when we pronounce the sentence to be "significant". It is clear that before the translation took place

Russell realized that it wasn't nonsense. Whether the translation shows why it wasn't nonsense or whether its being true or false shows why it is significant, is not clear. Strawson takes him to be saying that "significance" is a function of truth or falsity.

1.4 Interpretations of Russell's solution

1.41 As an "artificial" rendering

Russell's paper "On Denoting" has been called a "paradigm of philosophy". There is little doubt that this is true but what there has been doubt about is what exactly Russell has done. He himself, in 1957, interpreted his dealing with "The present king of France is wise" as artificial.⁽¹³⁾ We may suppose that he wanted, above all else, to fit the sentence for a logical system in as simple a way as possible. The implication would be that he is not giving the real interpretation of the sentence nor the ordinary interpretation of the sentence. Under this interpretation of his intention Strawson could not accuse him of not giving a proper account of the use of the sentence in ordinary language. But it becomes less certain also that Russell has really replied to Meinong. Nor would it be clear how his charge of artificiality against Frege is justified.

1.42 As an Empirical hypothesis

There is another alternative. Russell claims that "the proposition does not become nonsense merely because its hypothesis is false."⁽¹³⁾ In other words, Russell regards the proposition as

an Empirical hypothesis. He would be supposing then that there is someone who believes that there is a king of France just as we all may believe (mistakenly) that there is a king of the Watutsi, but later find out that there isn't. I think we must regard this interpretation as having special weight. Frege, who seems to have wanted to assimilate such sentences to mathematical ones which did not have values for certain variables, seems to have neglected the common fact that Empirical hypotheses may or may not be about something. In the cases when there is nothing to which the subjects of Empirical hypotheses refer, there seems little reason why we should not pronounce the sentences true or false on later knowledge. Further, it may not be a "defect" at all that we can talk about non-existent things in language. Similarly, one may argue against Strawson. Empirical hypotheses are not obviously "spurious" uses of language, e.g., "The ether retards the velocity of light" can hardly be called "spurious". It is difficult to see how exactly this interpretation works against Meinong. It is not clear how Meinong regarded such sentences. Meinong, if the concept of significance is relevant to him, seems to want to answer another question.⁽¹⁴⁾ For he seems to want to show why we can think about such things as universals, mathematical truths, logical truths, etc. (i.e., how they are intelligible). One thing he denied was the Empiricist account of how we "know" or "understand" mathematical truths, etc., i.e., how they are intelligible or significant. He seems to have assimilated non-existent things like "golden-mountain" and "round-square" and "present king

of France" to mathematical concepts (although this is not clear). It was not important to him whether it was a proper name like Pegasus or a description. Russell makes it seem that Meinong's was an empirical issue, which is not the case if we interpret Meinong sympathetically. However implausible particular extreme doctrines of Meinong might be, I don't think that Russell (or Strawson) represented fairly what he was up to. But of this I will speak later (Chapter 2).

1.43 Epistemological Reduction

Another important interpretation of Russell's intention is found in the introduction to his paper "On Denoting". Talking of denoting phrases he says:

The interpretation of such phrases is a matter of considerable difficulty;... The subject of denoting is of very great importance not only in logic and mathematics, but also in the theory of knowledge.⁽¹⁵⁾

Russell goes on to explain his well-known theory of "acquaintance". He says that "all thinking has to start from acquaintance, but it succeeds in thinking about many things with which we have no acquaintance". "The distinction between acquaintance and knowledge about", Russell says, "is the distinction between things we have immediate presentations of, and the things we can only reach by denoting phrases." In Problems of Philosophy, Russell claimed at one place that all knowledge is "knowledge about" and that we can't know directly anything except sensations and perceptions, and these are expressed by descriptive phrases.⁽¹⁶⁾ In other words, we don't

know the table, we can't know Bismark, etc., but have only indirect knowledge of them, i.e., they are constructions out of sense experience.

Now, it is possible to regard Russell's translation of "The present king of France" (or any other denoting phrase) as separate from Russell's epistemological assumptions, as Max Black⁽¹⁷⁾ suggests in one place. That is, in so far as Russell pointed out a category-error in assuming that "The present king of France" is a logical subject (like "Louis") and, in so far as Russell suggested a plausible interpretation for the phrase, we may accept or reject his contributions on these achievements alone.

But (and as Max Black also recognizes) the epistemological interpretation is also important and this for at least three reasons. The first is that Russell did in fact hope to create a fundamental (ideal?) language which gave a truer picture of reality (or one more suitable for science). Thus his efforts in Logical Atomism, and his desire as late as 1940 to do away with proper names and particulars and have only sensory terms like "red", etc. (c.f. Inquiry into Meaning and Truth).⁽¹⁸⁾ Next, we may interpret him as assuming an Empiricist criterion of intelligibility in the tradition of Locke and Hume. This is the most important basis for accepting or rejecting propositions as true or false. The third important thing about it is that it forms the basis for the rejection of Meinong's theory. For when Russell claimed that even philosophers should maintain a sense of reality it is most likely he meant the reality of sensory experience. The odd thing

is, however, that Russell admits even in "On Denoting" that "in perception we have acquaintance with objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character..."⁽¹⁹⁾. In what sense of acquaintance are we acquainted with "objects of a more abstract logical character"? In Problems of Philosophy Russell claimed that we intuit universals.⁽²⁰⁾ (At the same time, we may remember, he said we do not know tables and chairs directly!) If we are acquainted with abstract objects, intuit universals, etc., it may turn out that Russell did not disagree very radically with Meinong after all. But if Russell denies that we are ever acquainted with tables and chairs but only with sensations and perceptions then he would seem to be disagreeing most radically, for it was exactly this tradition (Empiricist) that Brentano and Meinong reacted against most violently.⁽²¹⁾ They denied that objects are "constructed" from discrete sense data. Further, it was exactly examples of non-existents, universals, etc., that did not seem to be dealt with adequately by the Empiricists as far as the "act" philosophers and psychologists were concerned. Finally, Meinong has said explicitly that only of things that exist that one can say true or false; the notions of "subsistence", etc., are to explain how it is that we can understand reference to non-existents, etc., i.e., the mind has additional powers than merely to "represent" the reality of sense experience. But of these matters I will speak further in Chapter 2.

1.5 Strawson's Arguments Against Russell

In "On Referring" (MIND 1950)⁽²⁰⁾ Strawson agrees that "The present

king of France is wise" is significant. But Strawson has an entirely different explanation for this fact. I will first deal with his arguments against Russell.

1.51 Strawson's Purpose

Strawson claims that Russell has claimed that the sentence "The present king of France is wise" is significant because it is true or false. Truth and falsity then are the basic criteria for saying that a sentence is significant. What bothers Strawson is whether one can say that the proposition is true or false at all:

"According to Russell, anyone who asserted S would be asserting that;

- (1) There is a king of France.
- (2) There is not more than one king of France.
- (3) There is nothing which is king of France and is not wise.

It is easy to see both how Russell arrived at this analysis, and how it enables him to answer the question with which we began, viz. the question: How can the sentence S be significant when there is no king of France? The way in which he arrived at the analysis was clearly what Russell did not by asking himself what would be the circumstances in which we would say that anyone who uttered the sentence S has made a true assertion. And it does seem pretty clear, and I have no wish to dispute, that the sentences (1)-(3) above do describe circumstances which are at least necessary conditions of anyone making a true assertion by uttering the sentence S. But, as I hope to show, to say this is not at all the same thing as to say that Russell has given a correct account of the use of the sentence S or even that he has given an account which, though incomplete, is correct as far as it goes; and is certainly not at all the same thing as to say that the model translation provided is a correct model for all (or for any) singular sentences beginning with a phrase of the form "the so-and-so".⁽²³⁾

1.52 The statement could not be made today

The sentence could have been true or false in the time of Louis XIV up to the time of the last French monarch. If someone uttered the

sentence in the reign of Louis the Fourteenth he would be (most likely) making a true or false proposition, assertion or statement. If one uttered it in the reign of Louis XV he would be making a false statement. The sentence could be uttered on any of these occasions and we could say true or false depending on the circumstances.

It is an entirely different situation, however, if one were to say in the twentieth century, "The present king of France is wise". This is neither true nor false nor can it be either true or false. You would give an entirely different answer. You would say something to the effect that it was neither true nor false. The question of truth or falsity does not arise. You would claim that either the questioner is pretending or badly informed about the state of politics in contemporary France. In other words, "The king of France is wise" cannot be used to make a proposition in the twentieth century. It can, however, be used in a joke, an illustration or some other non-referring use.

1.53 Russell confused "sentence" and "use of sentence"

So Russell was quite mistaken about the status of the "proposition" and its relation to significance. You cannot say that it is true or false as Russell had supposed. What led Russell to suppose that you could say true or false to it? Strawson claims that Russell had confused (1) sentence with (2) use and (3) utterance. When a "sentence" is used to refer to something particular then it is true or false. For example, "The present king of Greece is wise"

is true or false. But this had nothing to do with significance. We can understand "The present king of France is wise" although we are not using it to refer. It is merely a sentence which could have been used on many occasions to refer but the significance of which is independent of any particular use. Russell had not realized that "sentences" are significant independently of particular uses. Each sentence (it seems) expressed a proposition, and a unique one at that, according to Russell. It was an error for Russell not to distinguish "sentence" from "proposition" which (I presume Strawson wants to say) is a use of a sentence. A sentence is significant. "Sentence" and "proposition" are different categories according to Strawson. If Russell had seen this he would not have made such an error as to say that the sentence "The present king of France is wise" is true or false.

- 1.54 The sentence uttered today does not imply the existence of a king. Strawson also criticizes the logical rendition of "The present king of France is wise". "The present king of France is wise" is logically rendered "There is at least one king of France in existence" and "There is at most one king of France in existence" and "If anything is a king of France it is wise". Strawson claims that the original proposition does not imply "There is at least one king of France". If a person were making a joke, or illustrating an argument the sentence does not have existential import. Anybody using the sentence today does not imply that there is a king of France unless he is grossly misinformed. So in this case the translation cannot take place.

1.55 Strawson cracks a joke about meaning as an object

Strawson also attacks Russell's implicit notion that the meaning of a word is an object with which we are acquainted. It is claimed nowadays (e.g., by Ryle) that this notion has caused much mischief. Strawson says that if one asks for the meaning of the word "handkerchief" one doesn't produce a handkerchief from one's pocket.

Meaning cannot be identified with objects:

"If I talk about my handkerchief, I can, perhaps, produce the object I am referring to out of my pocket. I cannot produce the meaning of the expression 'my handkerchief' out of my pocket. Because Russell confused meaning with mentioning, he thought that if there were any expressions having a uniquely referring use which were what they seemed (i.e., logical subjects) and not something else to disguise, their meaning must be the particular object which they were used to refer to." (24)

The general theory of Russell has been called by Ryle "The Relational Theory of Meaning" or "Correspondence Theory of Meaning". The new theory may be called the "Use Theory of Meaning", "Functional Theory of Meaning", or even "Coherence (?) Theory of Meaning".

1.56 Strawson's views compared with Frege's and Geach's

It is interesting to point out here the resemblance between Strawson and Frege. At another place (Introduction to Logical Theory)⁽²⁵⁾ Strawson introduces the notion of presupposition. (He speaks of presupposition in Individuals⁽²⁶⁾ also). The presupposition of the use of sentences like "The present king of France is wise", "All John's children are asleep", etc., is always that the thing referred to by the subject of the sentences exists.

Further, a presupposition cannot be false. Only where the subject exists can the use of a sentence be true or false. Where there is no such presupposition the use is "spurious"; the question of truth or falsehood "does not arise". It is interesting to note that Frege⁽²⁷⁾ also seemed to hold that the presupposition of the use of sentence is that the subject of the sentence (i.e., what is talked about) exists. It is of interest, also, to note the argument of P.T. Geach⁽²⁸⁾ (Analysis 1949) against Russell's theory of descriptions. Geach also claims that the question of truth or falsity does not arise for "The present king of France is wise". The sentence contains a fallacy called the "fallacy of many questions" as in "Have you stopped beating your wife?". Here three things are actually said, one of which is that you have a wife. Since this is not the case, the question of truth or falsehood does not arise.

1.6 Strawson's Own Solution

A difficulty in knowing exactly what Strawson claims is the generality of his formulations (see the quotations in 1.62 and 1.63). Another difficulty is the changes in formulation. From the quotations given below it will be seen that such changes may not be inconsequential. For it is one thing to say that meaning is a function of use and another to say that meaning is the use or the rules of use. At other places he says that expressions are meaningful if they are used; another place he says that they are meaningful if they could be used, and he even says at one place that they are significant if one can imagine a use.

From some of the above one may suppose that Strawson is defining what 'meaning' or 'significance' is.

From other quotations it seems evident that Strawson is giving in effect a criterion for significance of sentences and expressions.

He says something to the effect that a sentence is meaningful or significant if and only if it can be used or if one can imagine using it. Now each one of these (use, imagine a use, rules for use) is a different criterion (if Strawson had a criterion in mind). This makes his intention quite difficult to decipher.

Finally, as I am tended to interpret him, Strawson gives a rival explanation to Russell's (and the Empiricists') of how it is that we can understand a sentence. Although Strawson did not say this explicitly, I think that this is the most interesting interpretation of his intention. As an explanation it is an important step in the development of theories of meaning, but it is quite difficult to understand exactly why sentences are significant.

1.62 Significance and Use

It will be convenient to separate tentatively the relation between 'significance' and 'use' and the relationship between 'significance' and 'rules of use'.

Strawson says:

The fact that the sentence and the expression, respectively are significant just is the fact that the sentence could be used, in certain circumstances, to say something true or false, that the expression could be used, in certain circumstances to mention a particular person."(29)

Pretty well the same notion is expressed in Introduction to Logical Theory:

"For a sentence of the statement-making type to have meaning, it is not necessary that every use of it at any time, at any place, should result in a true or false statement. It is enough that it should be possible to describe or imagine circumstances in which its use would result in a true or false statement."(30)

Strawson implies that if a sentence can be used in some circumstances to ascribe then it is thereby significant, i.e., it can be understood.

The matter of use is complicated in many ways. What sorts of things are used? Certainly not only sentences are used. Motor cars, roads, maps, axes, fishing nets, levers, lamps, etc., are used. In what ways does the use of language differ from the use of, say, axes? If sentences are significant how is their significance different say from the significance of a lever? Unfortunately, Strawson doesn't raise any questions about use. But I think that they are important for interpreting his explanation. If expressions are mere marks on paper and are used and it is further said that significance is a function of their use, it is important to explore what is meant.

1.63 Significance and Rules of Use

It is obvious that "use" and "rules of use" are two different things, however closely related. To criticize a use is not necessarily to criticize a rule of use, e.g., I may make a new use, e.g., a metaphorical use. To ask for a use is not necessarily to ask for a rule of use. To say that a sentence is significant because one can imagine a use for it is not to say that it is significant because there are rules for using it. (See Chapter 4).

1.64 Quotations from Strawson

I will now quote some typical passages that illustrate this thesis from "On Referring":

"The question whether the sentence is significant or not is the question whether there exists such language habits, that the sentence logically could be used to talk about something; and is hence quite independent of the question whether it is being so used in a particular occasion."(31)

"Meaning in at least one important sense is a function of the sentence or expression; mentioning and referring and truth or falsity are functions of the use of the sentence or expression. To give the meaning of the expression (in the sense in which I am using the word) is to give general directions for its use to refer or mention particular objects or persons; to give the meaning of a sentence is to give general directions for its use in making true or false assertions. It is not to talk about any particular occasion of the use of the sentence or expression. The meaning of an expression cannot be identified with which it is used, in a particular occasion, to refer to. The meaning of a sentence cannot be identified with the assertion it is used, on a particular occasion to make. For to talk about the meaning of an expression or sentence is not to talk about its use on a particular occasion but about the rules, habits, conventions governing its use."(32)

1.65 Questions about the Interpretation of the Above

Further discussion of what "use", "rules of use", "significance" will be undertaken at later places where they become relevant. What exactly Strawson has done is not entirely clear for it is not clear what are the questions he has answered. For what did he mean by "How are expressions significant?" How does an appeal to "use" and "rules of use" help us in understanding what he means by "significant" or "meaningful" or "has meaning"? The new meaning of "significant" in the sense that mere marks on paper are significant is not clear to me and will become a major point in Chapter 4.

1.7 Summary of Strawson's Views

Strawson's Arguments may possibly be summarized roughly as follows:

- A. The sentence "The present king of France is wise" is significant.
- B. But not because it is true or false,
 - (1) because it is not true or false,
 - (2) it is not true or false because we wouldn't ordinarily say true or false to it; the question of truth or falsity does not arise.
 - (3) It does not arise because we would say true or false only when (we know that) the object referred to actually exists.
 - (4) That is, in fact-stating discourse the presupposition always is that the descriptum exists; and a presupposition cannot be false.
 - (5) If the sentence in question were to be uttered today the proper response would be to "gape", say "You're mistaken", "But there is no king of France", etc., but NEVER "That's untrue", "that's false", "You're wrong", etc.
 - (6) There are only two possible alternatives for a sentence: It is either used to make a statement, in which case it is true or false; or it is spurious.
 - (7) If the use is spurious it does not have existential import.
- C. Russell made a category-error, for:
 - (1) only sentences are significant, not statements;

- (2) only statements are true or false but they are not significant.

D. Sentences are significant because

- (1) they are used, there are rules of use for them, and
- (2) (implicitly) because things used are (automatically) significant, i.e., expressions are (like) tools.

E. The meaning of a word is not an object (Correspondence theory of Meaning).

CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM

2.0 Introduction

2.01 In this chapter I attempt to enquire into the question Strawson proposes⁴ to solve: How are sentences and expressions significant? Included in this general question is the particular one: How is a sentence such as "The present king of France is wise" significant when there is no king of France?

2.02 Presumably Meinong and Russell intended to answer this question also. But if we grant this, it is not entirely clear that these philosophers conceived the question in the same way. Part of the difficulty lies in the changes and restrictions in the applicability of the concept 'significance'. For example, Russell says that propositions are significant, whereas Strawson says that only sentences, as marks on paper, are significant. Another difficulty lies in the very problems these different philosophers intended to solve.

2.03 Therefore, I find it necessary to discuss the following topics in this chapter: (i) the variety of meanings and changes of meanings of significance, (ii) the many questions involved in Strawson's formulation, and (iii) the background of the controversy.

2.1 The Variety and Changes of the Meaning of Significance

2.11 The ordinary man's interpretation

There seems little doubt that "significance" is a philosophically technical word. We don't hear the ordinary man saying "This sentence is significant" or "That sentence is significant". If one attempts to elucidate the meaning of "significant" by appeal to what we ordinarily say he is, thus, at once faced with a major difficulty. In an informal survey of acquaintances of mine at the garage, in the grocery-store and at the bank, I found that the only recognized use of the word "significant" is in sentences like the following: It is significant that China is buying wheat from Canada; or, It is significant that so many people should shop at shopping centres rather than down-town. The prevailing opinion is that significant means something like "interesting", "noteworthy", "remarkable" or even "important".

2.12 The Dictionary is not Helpful

When we consult the dictionary⁽¹⁾ we read "definitions" like the following: "having a meaning", "expressive, suggestive, with pregnant or secret sense"; "noteworthy". Such formulations, and others found in larger dictionaries, are not especially helpful in understanding what philosophers mean when they use the expression.

2.3 Philosophical Usage is Varied

We are forced to study philosophical usage but we at once come up against the difficulty of a variety of usages. When Locke uses the term he seems to mean that there is something which a word signifies or refers to. When Schlick uses it the term he seems to mean something like "method of verification" or "verifiable".

When Russell uses the term in his later writings he seems to mean something like Schlick meant. In Inquiry into Meaning and Truth⁽²⁾ he distinguishes at least two types of uses--syntactical and psychological. Epistemological considerations are also important.⁽³⁾ Strawson makes a radical innovation when he says that expressions and sentences (as marks on paper?) are significant not propositions (statements?).⁽⁴⁾ Some traditional alternatives for "significant" seem to be "makes sense", "intelligible", "meaningful", "understandable". Traditionally the opposite of such alternatives have been "senseless", "meaningless", "non-significant", "un-understandable". But obviously there are different types of "senselessness" or "nonsense": grammatical, epistemological, syntactical, semantic and pragmatic. "Quadruplicity drinks procrastination" may be said to be semantically senseless although it is of correct grammatical or syntactic form. "Twas brillig and his slithy toves..." is not clearly classifiable. "One ten mother saw" is not even grammatically of good form.

The question one wants to ask is: What does Strawson mean by significant? What is the opposite of significant? What is one saying when one says that "marks on paper" are significant? Are there degrees of significance?

2.14 Morton White's Interpretation

The trouble in interpreting what Strawson meant by significant is rather grave. One cannot say with certainty that he has understood what is meant for no discussion is given by Strawson himself. He seems to equate significant with "meaningful" or "has a meaning", but even this is not entirely clear.

In this situation one has to interpret what he says. The interpretation I give is guided by what I think to be his main motivation and what I think the context of philosophical problems he is trying to grapple with is. In my opinion, this is best clarified by what Morton White⁽⁵⁾ said of some other philosophers--that when they used such words as "meaningful" or "significant" they hoped to elucidate or explain certain mental-conduct words like "grasp" "know" or "understand". He says:

Statements in the theory of meaning like 'The word "philosopher" has meaning'... are usually offered as clarifications of '"Philosopher" is understood'.

"How is understanding possible?" we ask, and are told in reply: Because the terms we understand are meaningful, i.e., full of meanings that are there to be grasped.

What I am suggesting is that we regard "significant" as meaning "understandable". This interpretation is reinforced by consideration of what sort of question Strawson was asking. If I understand him correctly, his theory is opposed to the Correspondence theory of Meaning. This theory was incarnated in Russell's interpretation of what Wittgenstein was trying to do in the Tractatus⁽⁶⁾; he was trying to answer the question: How can one set of facts (marks on paper) be about (be related to) another set of facts in the world? Strawson claims that such a theory as Russell held (meaning is an object) is erroneous. Strawson talks of "expressions" and "sentences" as marks on paper and then goes on to say that they are used to say such and such--they don't represent or picture anything. How can they be used to talk about things? Because people know uses, know rules of uses. How do they know

these rules? How do they understand these rules? How do they understand the use of marks on paper to refer? The question then, under one interpretation, is, How are marks on paper understandable? Further discussion of the question will be given in the next section (§2.26).

2.15 Variety of substitutions for "x" in "x is significant".

Let us suppose we say "x is significant". To show the variety of usages it is instructive to ask, what can be substituted for "x"? The fact is that a variety of things have been supposed to qualify. Keeping in mind the multitude of interpretations of significant we have the following substitution-instances: Ideas (clear and distinct--Descartes), ideas from experience (Locke), objects of thought (Meinong), propositions (Frege, Russell, Church), protocol-sentences (Neurath) and sentences and expressions as marks on paper (Strawson). It is clear that Locke wanted to separate "intelligible" ideas from nonsense. Descartes would want, most likely, to say that the rational is the intelligible. It can be argued that when Russell talked about propositions being significant he was in the Locke-Descartes tradition, i.e., the proposition is intelligible (i.e., it is within reason?). The Logical Positivists, also, like Locke, seemed to want to put a limit to rational (?) human discourse and drew the line at the experience-able. (Perhaps even those who talk about the meaningfulness of "life", "actions", "objects" are within the rationalist tradition.)

But Strawson is seemingly out of this tradition. When he says expressions are significant he doesn't want to say anything about

the rational or the intelligible. The nearest he comes to this is to say some uses are "spurious", i.e., They are not used to state facts, not to engage in rational discourse. (In these cases the presupposition always is that there is something talked about. In this sense he is, surely, in the Empiricist tradition.) The senses of "significant" will become clearer in the next section when the questions are discussed.

2.2 The Variety of Interpretations of the Question

2.21 List of Re-formulations

Strawson tries to answer the question: How are expressions and sentences significant? This seems rather straight-forward but unfortunately there is considerable difficulty in interpreting what is intended. I will list some of the different ways the question can be interpreted:

1. What are criteria for significance?
2. How is significance defined?
3. How can we explain how language is understood (learned)?
4. What is the nature of human understanding such that humans can communicate by language?
5. How is naming possible?
6. How is it possible to understand the language of "classes", "universals", "non-existents", etc.?
7. What is the relation between one set of facts (marks on paper) and another (objects in the world)?
8. How is the world represented in language?

9. How are ideas represented by words?
10. How are propositions about non-existents possible?
11. How can we understand reference to non-existents?
12. How do you know the meaning of words?
13. How do you know the meaning of abstract words?
14. How are marks on paper used to refer?
15. How are marks on paper understandable to humans in a community?
16. How can a human individual understand, apprehend, make sense of, see the point of, know the reason why, know how to use, marks on paper (to communicate)?
17. How do we know, understand, learn rules of use of words?
18. Why are we able to name things as we do?

Not only is there difficulty in understanding which of these is intended but there is considerable difficulty in understanding any attempt to explain what any one of the given questions means. If even this were clear it is very difficult to know what sort of answer is asked for. Finally it is not at all easy to know what are the criteria of an adequate answer.

2.22 The Hazards of Dealing with the Question

It is hazardous to attempt to proceed without clarifying the above-mentioned difficulties adequately. But it would take a great amount of labour to do so; thus in this thesis I will merely select what I consider to be a reasonable set of interpretations in the context of the controversy between Russell and Strawson.

My reasons, apart from practical necessity, will be evident from what follows in the rest of this chapter.

2.23 Russell's Interpretations of the Question and his Answers

How did Russell answer the question? In the introduction⁽⁷⁾ to "On Denoting", it is evident that Russell is giving at least two answers to the question: How is the proposition 'The present king of France is wise' significant? The first is a semantico-logical answer and the second an epistemological answer. These two are connected but can be treated separately.

2.24(1) As a translation

The first answer may be summarized thus: The sentence is significant because it means such and such. In other words he interprets it in the sense of giving a translation of it. Now this sort of answer may be satisfactory to some people and for some purposes. We may imagine a person being puzzled by the sentence "All mimsey were the borogoves" and we may imagine he is satisfied when we tell him that it means "the three-legged creatures of the Black Swamp were frisky". What we are not clear about however is why the person should be satisfied or why the translation is correct or satisfactory. Why is Russell's translation satisfactory? There seems to be at least four grounds. The first is that Russell's logical intuition (superior to most other people's) justifies it. Now intuition itself "per se" is not necessarily offensive. But the trouble is how can we justify the intuition? Suppose other people were to have a different intuitive translation? Although

there is considerable discussion of what is meant by "exist" among logicians, I think generally speaking most logicians agree with Russell. If Russell also claims grammatical intuition here, there may be some controversy for some grammarians might take exception to the translation. Another ground for saying that "this is what the sentence really means" would be an appeal to what we really do mean in ordinary language, i.e., intuition into ordinary language⁽⁹⁾. Here Strawson challenges him. Strawson seems to have another analysis of the sentence and denies that Russell's translation is what the sentence means in ordinary language. Russell, in 1957, has suggested that the new rendering of the sentence is artificial⁽¹⁰⁾ i.e., it is (perhaps) an 'ad hoc' translation to fit a logical system (of, say, Principia Mathematica) and he doesn't really care what is or is not possible in ordinary language. This is perfectly defensible, it seems to me. Of course difficulties may arise when the logical system is applied to ordinary language, if such applications are intended at all. Finally, there is the theory that Russell is giving an epistemological-scientific translation. That is, in the spirit of Mach, for instance he may have wanted to reduce all language to a basic empiricist or phenomenalist language.

2.25(2) As requiring an Epistemological Answer and the Answer as Criterion

The second answer Russell gives has to do with his epistemological assumptions (and perhaps this even is the presupposition of his first). Russell translates the sentence into a form in which we can say true or false. But why can we say true or false? Because

they are of sense experience. And this ultimately is the basis for pronouncing the proposition significant, or not. If it were not so pronounceable then it wouldn't be significant. We may go so far as to say (although there is not enough evidence for it) that Russell accepts Locke's Empirical criterion of truth "limit of human understanding"). As such Russell would be answering this question: When are propositions significant? Russell does not use the word significant in 1905 but he does use the word "apprehend" or "think about":

Thus in every proposition that we can apprehend (i.e., not only those whose truth or falsity we can judge of, but all we can think about) all the constituents are really entities, with which we have immediate acquaintance.⁽¹¹⁾

In other words when we say that a proposition is significant we mean that the proposition is apprehended (i.e., understood?) and, for Russell, this seems to be tantamount to saying that there are relevant sense-experiences. The limit of intelligibility is simply the limit set by sense-experience. Other propositions would be gibberish(?). If then we find certain propositions intelligible we may be sure they are about sense experience, otherwise we wouldn't understand them. If we can't obviously see how they are about sense experience then they are to be "translated" into such a form that they do become obvious.

It so happens that Russell was forced to admit even in "On Denoting", that there are abstract truths of the mind (without recourse to sense experience)⁽¹²⁾ and he freely admitted intuition of universals in Problems of Philosophy⁽¹³⁾. Later however (as in Our Knowledge of the External World) he wanted to construct everything (i.e.,

all knowledge) from sense experience (i.e., in a language of Descriptions).

It may, therefore, be argued that the primary criterion for significance, (understandability or intelligibility) is, for Russell, derivability from sense experience. Truth and falsity depend on this and come later than significance, i.e., significance is prior to truth and falsity. It is only when we understand a proposition that we can go on to say whether it is true or false. If one were to ask Russell why any given proposition is significant all he would have to do to give an adequate answer would be to quote his criterion. Assuming that there is agreement about his criterion (as there is not) then there must be agreement about significance. Although Strawson is justified in attempting to take Russell to task on the matter of truth or falsity (even though Strawson's reasons may not be persuasive) yet if we look at the matter epistemologically we would see that Russell did not put as much stress on truth or falsity as on "sense experience" which itself is the primary condition under which one could at all pronounce a proposition true or false. In this sense Russell is agreeing with Locke's "limit to human understanding". Strawson, however, shifts the meaning of "significant" so radically that the question of intelligibility (or limit thereof) became no concern of his. If "marks on paper" are significant, not propositions, then Strawson and Russell are not dealing with the same problem at all, it seems to me. Each may be legitimately dealing with different problems. (What has happened, one may speculate, is that Strawson has given

up trying to solve Russell's problem and has attempted to find another set of conditions for intelligibility but in this process the sense of intelligibility itself has changed.)

2.26(3) A Third Interpretation: The Answer as Explanation

But there is a third way one may interpret the question. The question is only implicit in "On Denoting". It has to do with Russell's general theory of names.⁽¹⁴⁾ I think this is the most fundamental question (i.e., interpretation) as far as the Russell-Strawson controversy is concerned. Perhaps the best way to introduce this interpretation is to remind the reader of Russell's interpretation of Wittgenstein's purpose in the Tractatus. In the introduction to that work Russell said that Wittgenstein was trying to answer this question: What relation must one fact (such as a sentence) have to another, in order to be capable of being a symbol for that other? In Logical Atomism, we may suppose, that Russell tried to answer this question. Strawson wants to deny that words stand for, represent, picture or mirror reality (the Correspondence theory of Meaning). Sentences and expressions, as marks on paper, are significant in another way. In general Strawson says that words are significant because they are used by people to do certain things not because they represent. Strawson's answer, as I will argue in Chapter 4, is in the form of an analogy. But we are still not clear about what this question (and answer) means. For it depends on whether one puts the emphasis on what is represented or how words represent. In the one case we look

for something that is the meaning of the word and in the other we want to know how we understand the relationship between words and objects; we want to know how we understand the meaning of a word, how we grasp the relationship between words and objects or whatever other mental-conduct words we use. For Strawson, these questions become roughly: How do we know the uses of words; how do we know rules for the use of words? As I have already pointed out in this chapter, Morton White has interpreted the questions involved in the way I am now suggesting. When a philosopher asks: How are expressions significant? he asks: How do you know the meaning of expressions, or, How do we know the relationship between words and things? Russell, later in his life, considered Behavioristic answers in Inquiry into Meaning and Truth and Human Knowledge.

When Strawson says, for instance, that there are rules for using an expression and that we know uses or rules for using expressions what are we to understand by "know"? Granted that Russell had been vague (as Locke) when he used terms like "stand for", "represent", etc.; granted that when Empiricists claimed that children learn words by observation and induction they were quite vague and even perhaps wrong, how much clearer are we when we talk about "use" or "know the use" or "know rules" for the use of words? The reason why the answer seems so obvious and persuasive is that the implicit analogy between "marks on paper" and "tools" is supposed to explain how we understand language. For

the use of tools in general is supposed to be familiar and thus unproblematic. In Chapter 4 I will argue that the use of tools is problematic and much more has to be said before we are persuaded that the relation between words and things is explained by the introduction of phrases like "use", "know the use of", "know rules" etc.

In the above I don't want to suggest that my main argument of this thesis (see Introduction) is a psychological (or even epistemological) one. Psychological considerations of how we understand words and sentences (how they are significant) form only a part of my general argument (see §4.7). The main thing I want to emphasize is that Strawson's account is, in some way, an alternative to the Correspondence theory of Meaning.

2.27(4) A Fourth Interpretation of Strawson's General question

A fourth interpretation of the question: How are sentences and expressions significant? depends on the third interpretation. We ask: What is the relationship of marks on paper and things not in the world? By "world" is meant here "the world of sensory experience". This question has plagued both Empiricists and Behaviorists. It seems that Meinong was especially interested in answering the question: How can we talk about things that don't exist? The general point he (and other phenomenologists) made was that the human mind could operate without recourse to immediate presentations (of sense experience). We can think about non-existents, conceptual objects, universals, etc., because the mind could directly grasp or intuit these in acts of thought. Unlike the

Empiricists they did not try to reduce such intelligible discourse to discourse about sense-experience.

The Neo-Behaviorists, such as Hebb,⁽¹⁵⁾ have found it necessary to admit "mediating processes" to explain how we can understand complicated things such as discourse about universals, etc. Hebb suggests that his "mediating processes" are roughly equivalent to what had been previously called "ideation". The philosopher H.H. Price⁽¹⁶⁾ has suggested that we should be more puzzled about how we have cognition of absent things. That such problems were important for past philosophers and remain important for psychologists is without doubt.

2.3 Background of the Controversy (Some Comments)

I will now give some comments which I hope will be of help in providing a wider perspective of the controversy. Since these comments are very general and not really important (except in a general way) for my main arguments in Chapters 3 and 4, they can be read as mere suggestions. One of the chief reasons for including them here is that there are many philosophers today who are altogether too condescending towards the problems of their predecessors and without much careful and sympathetic study dismiss their questions as "linguistic confusion". Contemporary Behaviorist psychologists (e.g., Hebb and Osgood) have come to realize that their predecessors outside the Behavioristic tradition were not as superstitious as early Behaviorists had supposed. I think contemporary philosophers of language still have to develop an appreciation of certain genuine problems in the manner of the

Neo-Behaviorists. In what follows it must not be thought that I am saying that all the writings of certain traditional philosophers must be accepted--I am merely saying that the problems were genuine, not necessarily the solutions.

2.31 Meinong's Error is not Necessarily Grammatical

There are many people who put the burden of the blame for the errors in Russell and his predecessors on their erroneous Theory of Names. Morris Lazerowitz⁽¹⁷⁾ in 1946 in his well-known paper "The Existence of Universals", has argued thus. Ryle⁽¹⁸⁾ has argued similarly in various places and parodied the Correspondence Theory of Meaning as the "'Fido'-Fido' theory. These philosophers claim that as soon as we see that this theory is erroneous we would not be tempted to postulate extra entities. The way to avoid such errors, Ryle suggests, is to follow Wittgenstein and regard words as tools or instruments to do things. The relationship between words and things is analogous to and equally as obvious as the relationship between a hammer and the nail it is used to strike, or between money and the cow it is used to buy. Strawson, we may suppose, agrees with this general line of thinking; for, surely, when he says that Russell did not realize that sentences are distinct from statements they are used to make, and when he cracked a joke about a handkerchief in his pocket not being the meaning of the word 'handkerchief' and when he referred to Russell's "disastrous" theory of names, he had more or less Ryle's and Wittgenstein's view in mind.

I think, however, that Strawson and Ryle have been unnecessarily condescending towards Russell and Meinong. The genesis of their problems is not simply their erroneous theory of names. As D.F. Pears⁽¹⁹⁾, in his well-known article, "Universals", has suggested, we should be skeptical on this point. (He suggests that the theory of universals was based on a poor analogy with natural processes.)

One of the main motivations for Meinong's theory, I want to suggest, was epistemological, i.e., it had more to do with what we can know and how we can know rather than with names. I will call the problems involved the Locke-Meinong controversy which in one form is the old Rationalist-Empiricist⁽²⁰⁾ controversy.

Locke had supposed (to put the matter briefly and perhaps somewhat falsely) that only ideas from sense-experience could be called "knowledge"; only discourse about ideas from sense-experience is intelligible or meaningful, etc. But there soon arose difficulty as to whether mathematical truths, universals, number, relations, theoretical entities, non-existent entities, etc., could be "reduced" to sense-experience. The problem, if it is not obvious how this reduction is to take place, is, how do we know these things? Brentano rejected the idea that these things were known by direct introspection. Brentano, in general, suggested that there were unitary, global, unreducible acts of thought and the objects of thought were likewise unreducible to sensory terms. In psychology, Von Ehrenfels⁽²¹⁾, a student of Brentano, suggested that form in space and time was a new element (Gestaltqualität). Perception is

a product of the imposition of a new element (Grundlage) on sensation (Fundamente). For example "squareness" is imposed on the sensation of four lines to perceive a square. There are higher and higher levels of "form-qualities". Meinong⁽²²⁾ accepted and elaborated Von Ehrenfels' views about real complexions (perception) and ideal complexions (conception). These notions are elaborated to, perhaps, a ridiculous degree. But I hope that it is clear that Meinong's problem arose not from linguistic necessity but from epistemological necessity. They were not so silly as to want merely to preserve "objects" in order to perpetrate the grammatical fallacy that every word must refer to an object.

We may also say that Russell was not entirely fair to Meinong and other phenomenologists when he tried to show that Meinong's postulation of "subsistent" and other entities resulted in a contradiction. Meinong has said quite explicitly that he is using the word "exist" in different ways. I will quote a summary of this by John Passmore (A Hundred Years of Philosophy):⁽²³⁾

Some objects, but only some, Meinong describes as 'existing'. Thus for example, a green leaf exists. Other objects are said to be 'real' without existing. The difference between red and green, for example, is a 'real' difference, but it does not 'exist' in the same sense in which a red book and a red leaf both 'exist'. Indeed, no 'objects of a higher order'--objects which contain a relation between existences--can, Meinong thinks, properly be said to exist.

It is by confusing sense-object with ideal object that one can charge Meinong with contradiction. But I am not interested here in defending Meinong's views, I am interested only in defending his problem, which, to the best of my knowledge, still in some

ways, exists even among psychologists. I will end these reflections by quoting another passage from Passmore:

It takes direct insight, Husserl concludes, to grasp the meaning of a statement. And it follows that meaning is something of which the Empiricist, with his rejection of any other access to experience except the comparison of particular experiences, can never give any account.⁽²⁴⁾

In general the other phenomenologists (Brentano, Meinong, Stumpf, etc.) would agree.

2.32 The Concept of Use

2.321 The Concept of Use Originated with Wittgenstein

The discoverer of the concept of use (in recent philosophy) is Wittgenstein. The concept is already found in the Tractatus⁽²⁵⁾. But it was only later that it became important. Initially Wittgenstein was interested in denying a previous view of language that he held in the Tractatus. This was similar, if not the same, view of language held by Russell in Logical Atomism and which is reputed to have derived from Mill and ultimately the Scholastics and Aristotle. I have said already that the view that words stand for objects, or represent objects, or picture reality, is called the Correspondence Theory of Meaning. According to Moore⁽²⁶⁾, Wittgenstein was concerned to deny that words stand for or represent objects or that objects or facts are meanings of words. He said something to the effect that words are used according to rules and that words are meaningful in frameworks or contexts. All of this was in the early '30s.

2.322 These views were used by Schlick

These views became quite popular and were even used by Schlick. In reply to a criticism by C.I. Lewis⁽²⁷⁾ that the verification theory led to solipsism, Schlick⁽²⁸⁾ reinterpreted his theory thus:

Thus whenever we ask about a sentence, what does it mean?: what we expect is instruction as to the circumstances in which the sentence is to be used; we want a description of the conditions under which the sentence will form a true proposition, and those which will make it false. The meaning of a word or a combination of words is in this way, determined by a set of rules which regulate their use and which, following Wittgenstein, we call rules of their grammar taking this word in its widest sense.

2.323 Some other targets of the Concept of Use

I will briefly indicate some other targets of the concept of use:

(1) The Meaning of Words as Objects in the World.

We have already seen that Strawson ridiculed this view. Wittgenstein himself in Remarks 40 and 41 of the Philosophical Investigations asked what happens to the meaning of the name Mr. N.N. when Mr. N.N. dies. Gilbert Ryle⁽²⁹⁾ in a well-known article "The Theory of Meaning" says this:

It was only later that Wittgenstein consciously and deliberately withdrew his remaining foot from the denotationist camp. When he said "Don't ask for the meaning ask for the use", he was imparting a lesson which he had to teach himself after he had finished with the Tractatus. The use of an expression, or the concept it expresses, is the role it is employed to perform, not any thing or person or event for which it might be supposed to stand. Nor is it the purchasing power of a coin to be equated with this book or that car-ride which might be bought with it.

(2) Platonic Entities

Similarly, the concept of use helps to clear away Platonic entities:

If the meaning of an expression is not an entity denoted by it, but a style of operation performed with it, not a nominee but a role, then it is not only repellant but positively misleading to speak as if there existed a Third Realm whose denizens are meanings.⁽³⁰⁾

(3) Meaning is not an idea

Similar arguments prevail against identifying meaning with mental processes. Wittgenstein argues this in Remarks 140 ff. of the Philosophical Investigations.

(4) Fact-stating Discourse

There are countless uses of language as Wittgenstein (in The Investigations Remark §23) has said. Ryle agrees:

There is not one mold, such as the "Fido"-Fido mold, into which all significant expressions are to be forced. On the contrary there is an endless variety of categories of sense or meaning.⁽³¹⁾

2.324 The Understanding of Language

It is often thought that philosophers who talk of use and rules of use are not committed to any theory of how we understand or learn language. But this is not so. There is a definite attitude towards the understanding of language and this attitude is consistently anti-mentalistic. Gustav Bergmann⁽³²⁾ in Meaning and Existence has argued this. On the previous paragraph it was mentioned that Wittgenstein did not want to identify meaning with any mental process. He also seems to have argued that "understanding" hasn't got anything to do with awareness of mental states (though it is difficult to say what he intends in his remarks on "following rules" §180 ff. of the Investigations). At

various places Wittgenstein even talks about "habits", "dispositions" and "Training" (Remarks 149, 198). At least for some people (e.g., Bergmann⁽³³⁾) Wittgenstein is sympathetic to Behaviorism. However obscure Wittgenstein's relationship to Behaviorism might be, Ryle's seems to be clearer. At various places he says that understanding the use of a word is much like understanding how to do various other things:

Learning the meaning of an expression is more like learning a piece of drill than like coming across a previously unencountered object. It is learning to operate correctly with an expression and with any other expression equivalent to it.⁽³⁴⁾

- 2.35 H.H. Price's interpretation of "know" as in "know the meaning of" H.H. Price⁽³⁵⁾ has an interesting interpretation of the position of people like Ryle and Strawson. He suggests that the position is a type of nominalism:

Let us start with the phrase 'knowing what a word means'. We tend to assume that the word 'knowing' here is equivalent to 'being aware of' or 'apprehending' or 'being conscious of'; that knowing what a word means consists in being aware of something which the word stands for. This assumption is made not only by the Realist but also by the Idea-Theorist. The Realist says that it is an extra-mental entity, the Idea-Theorist that it is an intra-mental one--either a concept or an image as the case may be.

But according to the Nominalist this assumption is a mistake; indeed, a double mistake. When we speak of knowing what a word means, the word 'know' (he says) is being used not in a cognitive sense, but in the sense of knowing how to, knowing how to do something; as when we speak of knowing how to ride a bicycle... So, too, with knowing what a word means. Knowing what the word 'black' means is not a queer kind of non-sensuous awareness. It is a kind of skill rather than a kind of awareness. As I have said, it is like knowing how to ride a bicycle. We may note, incidentally, that the knowing how is not an

act, but a permanent state, a habit or acquired disposition. (Hence the name 'Linguistic Habit Theory', suggested above).

2.326 The Above Account will be Useful in Chapter 4

Although the above account of the concept of use and the general background of the controversy has been perhaps too lengthy, I think it is important to keep such considerations in mind. In Chapter 4 I will argue against the effectiveness of the analogical explanation of significance (words are significant because they are used like other things are used) and the above comments will become quite important for in an extreme form, the claim seems to be that words are significant (understandable?) just as tools are (understandable?).

CHAPTER III

COMMENTS ON STRAWSON'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST RUSSELL

3.0 Introduction: Strawson's Arguments Re-stated

3.01 It will be useful to re-state Strawson's arguments here:

- A. "The present king of France is wise" is significant as Russell (and Meinong) claimed.
- B. But NOT because it is true or false;
 - (1) Because it is not true or false.
 - (2) It is not true or false because we wouldn't ordinarily say true or false to it; the question of truth or falsity does not arise.
 - (3) It does not arise because we would say true or false only when (we know that) the object referred to actually exists.
 - (4) That is, in fact-stating discourse, the presupposition always is that the descriptum exists; and a presupposition cannot be false.
 - (5) To a sentence such as "The present king of France is wise", if uttered today, the proper response is to gape, say "You are mistaken", or say "But there is no king of France", etc.; but NEVER "That's untrue", or "That's false", or "You're wrong", etc.
 - (6) There are only two alternatives for a sentence--it is either used to make a statement (and thereby necessarily true or false) or "spurious" ("secondary"?) in use.
- C. Unlike Russell's erroneous belief,

(1) only expressions and sentences are significant (but never true or false)

and (2) only statements are true or false (but never significant).

D. Sentences are significant

because (1) they are used, there are rules for using them, we can imagine uses for them, and because (2) sentences are used like other things (tools?) are used.

E. The Correspondence Theory of Meaning is wrong.

3.02 The Purpose of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to bring some objections against Strawson's claims in B and C.

B and C are mainly directed against Russell's logico-semantic answer to the question, as explained in Chapter 2. There it was argued that one answer to the question, How is the proposition significant, is merely to show what it means by a translation. Strawson supposes that Russell is giving an ordinary-language translation.

3.1 B(2)

B(2) supposes that it is necessary for us to be able to say, or to say, ordinarily that a given statement is true or false for it to be actually (?) true or false. Generally, for philosophy (as for logic), whether something is true or false depends on whether

we ordinarily say that it is true or false. Now I don't think that this is entirely correct. For it may be that things that are true or false are not necessarily pronounced true or false in ordinary language for a variety of (ordinary-language?) reasons. In other words, if we don't say true or false to something in ordinary language, it still may be true or false. We may not say true or false ordinarily merely because to do so would be rude, trivial, pointing out the obvious; sometimes no reply is expected, it would be being too fussy, etc.

I will give some examples of some of these cases:

(a) Cases in which it would be trivial or "fussy" to say true or false:

(1) The face of Helen launched a thousand ships.

(False? There were only nine hundred and ninety!)

(2) We won the game--the final score was 300 to 5.

(False? Actually the score was 301 to 5!)

(3) They came at three o'clock.

(False? They actually came at 3.01 o'clock.)

(b) Cases in which it would not be worthwhile to say true or false:

(1) I saw a man today who was five feet five inches tall.

(so what?)

(2) Food is important to life.

(Tell me more!)

(c) Cases in which it might be thought rude to say true or false:

(1) They said good-bye to Winston Churchill.

(How could you say good-bye to a dead body?)

(2) Fine day, isn't it?

(The weather-man said it would rain tonight!)

(d) Cases in which no reply is expected:

(1) The gates are closed at five.

(2) Lodgers are advised to wake themselves up.

(3) Swim at your own risk.

(4) The natives are restless tonight. (said as a conversation opener.)

The point of these examples is simply to show that in ordinary language there are many reasons why one may not say true or false; but, if pressed, it may not be breaking any rules, to say true or false. Thus, it seems that what we do or do not do in ordinary language, is no certain guide to what we may do or what we should do in logic or philosophy.

3.2 B(3)

B(3), I think, is such that a large part of our language will have to be avoided or hedged around with many "caveats", if it were true that we would say true or false only when we absolutely know that what we are talking about exists. For, in fact, we often make statements which we think are true but which later turn out to be false because what we were talking about were things that did not exist. Sometimes, on the other hand, we deny certain claims because we think that a fiction is being perpetrated upon us--and then later we find out differently. We don't always know that a descriptum exists and to insist that we talk only when we

are one hundred per cent certain that a descriptum exists is to impose much too stringent a condition on both ordinary and scientific language. Even so there have been many, many cases in which we all have felt perfectly certain that something is the case but then find out that what we were talking about did not exist. The most spectacular example of this perhaps has been the "ether". Many statements about it were made in the nineteenth century which were thought to be true or false.

I will give some other examples of cases where we make statements but we do not know whether the descriptum exists or not:

(1) The gases in the inside of the sun must be quite hot.

(Nobody knows whether there are gases in the inside of the sun.)

(2) The Russian premier is plotting the fall of Capitalism.

(The said person may have died last night.)

(3) The proof of Fermat's theorem is well-known.

(As things stand this is false but there may not be a proof.)

(4) Electrons flit back and forth.

(There may not be electrons at all!)

I will give more examples in the next section when I argue that Strawson has been unfair to Russell in not allowing that statements about the king of France may be Empirical hypotheses. The above examples may be regarded as Empirical hypotheses also.

3.31 B(4)

What I have said in the previous section applies here also. We don't always know whether a descriptum exists or not and yet boldly

say true or false. Statements about electrons, the ether, ghosts, life on Mars, next year's harvest, potatoes in the basement (which unknown to us have been stolen) etc. may all qualify. Many other cases may be added (e.g., the site of Atlantis, the present king of the Watutsi, etc.).

One of the big sources of confusion in the controversy between Russell and Strawson has been the different sorts of interpretations that have been put on the example chosen ("The present king of France is wise"). Perhaps it has been a poor example. What Russell seems to have done is to assimilate the proposition to cases like statements about electrons, angels, ether, etc. Russell, we may suppose, may want to claim that some people may seriously believe that there is a king of France. In other words Russell treats it like an Empirical hypothesis. He himself says in "On Denoting" that "the proposition does not become false merely because its hypothesis is false".⁽¹⁾

It seems "senseless", "absurd" to Strawson to say true or false to the statement because he can imagine no circumstances which would allow us to say true or false to it. The question of truth or falsity "does not arise" for him because he cannot regard it as an Empirical Hypothesis. But it may be that at least some people believe that there is a king of France and a conversation among them could result in pronouncing such a proposition as true or false. There is the off-chance that this is possible. On

inquiring with the French Consulate, I learned that there is a pretender to the French throne (the Count of Paris). I was told also that there are some people who do consider the gentleman a king. (They also said he is bald!) Such people would resist the suggestion that they are mistaken. On the contrary, to judge from other reactionaries, they would say that Strawson is mistaken. Soon he will re-assume his power, they know!

All I want to argue in the above is that the proposition in question may be legitimately regarded as an Empirical hypothesis. What Strawson has done is to assimilate it to trick cases like, Have you stopped beating your wife? If you do not have a wife it is difficult to answer "yes" or "no". (Also if you don't beat your wife.) (Geach⁽²⁾ also says that the question of truth or falsity "does not arise".) It seems that Strawson claims the same sort of thing for "The present king of France is wise" (as Geach does). Strawson gives another example: All John's children are asleep⁽³⁾. This statement Strawson says cannot be true or false unless John has children. The presupposition of a statement always is that the thing referred to by the subject of the sentence does actually exist. But here also we may regard the sentence as an Empirical hypothesis. Imagine a stranger in town checking coats at a meeting where people have promised to arrive when their children are asleep. He checks John's coat. Then he turns to his wife and says, "All John's children are asleep". His wife says "yes". It so happens, however, that John has no children

yet or all his children have died. But they don't know this.

This sort of situation is not implausible for often it has occurred in ordinary life. More important historical examples of the non-existence of presupposed entities have been the ether, phlogiston and animal spirits. Perhaps "universals", "classes", etc. are in this class also. Perhaps even "Pegasus" and "The Devil" are also in this class.

To repeat my point: the question of truth or falsity "does not arise" for Strawson because he does not treat "The present king of France is wise" as an Empirical hypothesis as Russell seemed to interpret it in "On Denoting". Russell's interpretation is defensible for this example as well as, perhaps, for most others. If we interpret the examples as Empirical hypotheses the presuppositions, Russell may argue, can be false (even though we don't know this).

3.32 I will now list some examples of cases in ordinary language where we do say true or false when the descriptum does not exist. Most of these examples have been taken from an unpublished paper by Professor H. Tenessen⁽⁴⁾ and Professor Benson Mates entitled "Notes for a Discussion of Russell and Strawson on Descriptions".

A. Cases in which we would say "That's false" if the descriptum does not exist:

(1) The lodger next door has offered me twice as much.

(There is no lodger next door.)

- (2) He is the one who stole my purse.
(Nobody stole her purse.)
- (3) The only car I have left is a Ford.
(unbeknowns to him, a Chev. has come in.)
- (4) The only one who saw what was coming was Smith.
(Smith didn't either; or John saw it too.)
- (5) The best Mosel wine of 1954 is Bernkaster Doktor.
(Pierporter Riesling is just as good.)
- (6) You stole the book that was on this desk.
(No book was on the desk.)
- (7) The cure for cancer is well-known.

B. Cases in which what is said may be true even if the descriptum does not exist:

- (1) The first person to open this box will be blown up.
- (2) If Smith has any surviving sons, then the eldest son is his heir. (He has no surviving sons.)
- (3) He isn't the one we are looking for.
(There is a suicide, but the police think it is a murder and are looking for the murderer.)
- (4) The second derivative of this function does not exist.
(As we say, there is no second derivative.)

C. Cases in which Strawson's discussion gives us no information as to what would be presupposed:

- (1) Smith is not the top man on anybody's list.
(Does it presuppose that on every list, or on some list, there is exactly one top man?)

2. If the square of a number is even, then the number is even.

(Does it presuppose that every number has exactly one square?)

3. The wife of a member is automatically a member.

(Does it presuppose that every, or some member has exactly one wife?)

3.4 B(6). The Dichotomy between "spurious" and "non-spurious"

The implication (and actual claim of Strawson) is that there is a dichotomy between the "bona fide" use of a sentence to state a fact (in which case we already know that the descriptum exists) and "spurious" uses (as in story-telling, etc.)⁽⁵⁾. Truth and falsity pertain only to fact-stating discourse. I want to make a few comments on this dichotomy. The first is that there is no sharp line separating fact-stating and story-telling. Haven't we told children stories and at the end they ask, Is that true? Sometimes we answer flatly that none of it is true but at other times we answer that only some of it is true. The incident of the man falling off his jack-ass and the incident about the king selling his crown were true.

My next observation is that we may preface all stories with the formula: What I am going to say is false. There is no reason then why we may not pronounce each of the statements occurring in the story as being false. We don't usually do this but this does not mean that we may not or could not do it.

Next, we may observe that some philosophers think that scientific

theories are fictions. In this case it may be necessary to say true or false to "fictitious" statements. In any case, we may argue that story-telling or fiction-making are not necessarily distinguishable from fact-stating. Sometimes, in important cases, they may be indistinguishable. We may suppose, at any rate, that the distinction is not as uncontroversial as Strawson seems to imply.

Finally, I want to comment on another implication of the separation. The perjorative term "spurious" has been changed (in a new edition of the paper "On Referring" reprinted in Flew Essays in Conceptual Analysis) to the milder form "secondary". But even this may be a misleading way of speaking. Strawson is certainly not as liberal as Wittgenstein who seemed to want to admit all discourse as "bona-fide". Story-telling would not be "spurious". Note what Wittgenstein says in Remark 23 of the Investigations⁽⁶⁾.

But how many kinds of sentences are there? Say assertion, question, or command?--There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences"...

Giving orders, and obeying them,--
Describing the appearance of an object, or giving
its measurement--
Reporting an event--
Speculating about an event--
Forming and testing a hypothesis--
Making up a story; and reading it--
Playacting--
Singing catches--
Guessing riddles--
Making a joke; telling it--

In the light of what Wittgenstein says, it is difficult to understand why Strawson wants to say that story-telling, etc. are "spurious" or "secondary" uses of language. Perhaps he is still dominated by older beliefs.

3.5 C(1), C(2) Statements are not Significant

It is hard to understand why statements or propositions can't be significant. There was a fairly well-established tradition, represented by Russell, in which propositions or statements were said to be meaningful or significant. Propositions were said to be intelligible as well as being true or false. It is hard to see how something could be true or false without at the same time being significant.

The reason for the radical break with tradition, was, no doubt, that some philosophers had tried to hypostasize propositions as entities in themselves, apart from sentences. Strawson uses the term "statement" instead of "proposition" but it is not clear how these two are related if they are at all.

Strawson says in one place that it is clear that we do not say⁽⁷⁾ the same things of expressions as we do of statements. But it is not clear to me, and I would even go so far as to say that it may not be clear to anybody. The fact is we don't say anything, in ordinary life, about such distinctions. We may, of course, say something if we had need to, as philosophers have need to. But the justification for what philosophers like Strawson, say, cannot be that the distinction is clear or that we do say such and such or don't say such and such. For generally speaking, one may claim, we don't say such and such merely because we haven't thought about it.

More than the above, I hesitate to say; for we don't have any

further guidance from Strawson himself.

3.52 What is the Shape, Colour and Size of Statements?

What is a statement? How can we identify a statement? Where does it exist?

Perhaps these questions are naive but one feels a puzzlement about them. Strawson, perhaps, would say that really there are no such things as statements but only "stating". People do certain things with sentences (as marks on paper) but "statements" are just a manner of speaking.

More has to be said in explication of what is meant by "statement" lest it be confused with the old-fashioned "proposition".

3.53 Sentences as Types

At one place Strawson says that sentences are types. Does this mean that there are classes of objects of which we say some are sentences and some expressions? On what basis do we make these classes? On the basis of similarity of use?

Now is it that the "same" sentence is used (in the "same" way?) on different occasions to do different things or is it that different sentences are used on different occasions to do the same things? For example, when we use the ink marks 'cat' on one occasion is it that the same type is used again or the same marks? At least one philosopher I.M. Bochenski⁽⁸⁾ thinks that different marks are used on different occasions to do the same things. The question of

"types" is not clear. Perhaps we use different marks that resemble one another. But the fact remains that since one statement only could be made at a time only one set of marks could be used at a time and when we make other statements other marks will have to be used. What the question of types solves is hard to say.

3.54 Where does "Significance" Exist?

If marks on paper or mere sounds are significant, how is it that they become so? What is it to say that expressions are significant? These questions are of extreme importance but will be deferred until the next chapter where they become the chief topic of discussion.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter the main thing I have argued is that it is possible that Strawson has not interpreted Russell in as fair a manner as possible, i.e., the statement may be an Empirical Hypothesis. I have also suggested that Strawson may not be justified in his assumption that if we don't say something is true or false ordinarily it means that we should not say true or false in a philosophical or scientific context.

Finally it was suggested that the grounds for his distinctions between what we can say of statements (they are not significant) and what we can say of sentences (they are significant) are not clear.

CHAPTER IV

USE AND SIGNIFICANCE

4.0 Introduction

4.01 Let us say, for the sake of argument, that Russell was wrong in his account of how words are significant or meaningful. Suppose we grant that an object, say a handkerchief, is not the meaning of a word ("handkerchief")⁽¹⁾. What account does Strawson give of meaning or significance? Strawson says that "meaning is a function of the sentence or expression"⁽²⁾; "meaning is a set of rules, habits, conventions for its use in referring"⁽³⁾; knowing the meaning is knowing how to use it correctly, knowing the circumstances of use⁽³⁾; "significance is the set of rules or conventions which permit such references to be made"⁽⁴⁾. At one place Strawson says he is making distinctions about the rôles⁽⁵⁾ or about the functional differences between words⁽⁶⁾.

No doubt these formulations and the claims Strawson intends to make seem clear to many. But there still seems to be some confusion as to what these formulations mean, how they are justified, or how they illuminate the concept of meaning (or significance).

There is no doubt that in some sense of "use" words are "used"; there is no doubt that "rules" are some how connected with using words; but exactly how such considerations help illuminate "meaning" is not clear to me.

In this chapter I am interested in asking the question: How does

an appeal to "use" and "rules of use" clarify, explain or define "significance"? In some senses of "explain", I think, the notion of use is designed to explain how words are significant. This, I think, should be the main emphasis in interpreting Strawson's intentions as I will argue later. Right now we may notice only that Strawson's account is a part of the so-called "Ordinary Language" polemic with traditional theories of meaning (Passmore calls Strawson's account the "locus classicus" of this debate⁽⁷⁾). In effect, then, Strawson like his sympathisers, is offering a rival theory of meaning and the justification of it may be called an explanation. Also, we may take him to be implying a general account of how we understand language and this account is not incompatible with the main stream of "Ordinary Language" philosophy. How the concept of use "explains" how we understand language is not at all clear to me and what I intend to do in this chapter is to explore how it might be an explanation and some of the difficulties one would encounter in trying to explain "significance" or "meaning" in terms of "use" and "rules of use".

4.02 Before I attempt to explore the supposition that Strawson is giving an explanation of how we understand language it would be profitable to explore the possibilities that he is attempting a definition of significance and/or a criterion of significance⁽⁸⁾. A definition or a criterion may be understood best in the context of an explanation but I will try to treat the suggested definitions and criteria as though they were independent from the context of explanation.

4.1 His Answer Taken as a Definition

It is difficult to say what kind of definition is intended by his various formulations. Is he stipulating⁽⁹⁾ what "meaning" or "significance" should mean? Is he discovering the real essence of meaning or the defining characteristics of meaning? If he is discovering the characteristics of meaning, are they intrinsic or relational? Or is it reportive, i.e., descriptive of how people speak? Or is it an aphoristic definition⁽¹⁰⁾? Or is he simply identifying "meaning" with "set of rules, habits, conventions"?

It would take too long to explore all of these in detail so my treatment will not be exhaustive.

(1) Let us suppose that Strawson "identifies" meaning with "set of rules, habits, conventions". At once we see that this is saying too much for we assimilate drastically "rules", "habits" and "conventions" if we leave Strawson's statement as such. The implications of each, I think, are such that we wouldn't "ordinarily" equate "habits" with "conventions". But suppose this were not important; suppose we merely said that "meaning" is "x" where in place of 'x' we put "rules of use".

In one sense I think that this is to make an error. For then we would be repeating, in another form, Russell's old error. For consider what Strawson says of Russell's notion that the meaning of a proper name or other noun is the object to which it refers.

When some one asks me for the meaning of "handkerchief" do I take the meaning out of my pocket and give it to him? This, Strawson would say, is absurd. Of course he is merely repeating Wittgenstein's criticism as found in Remarks 40 and 41 of the Philosophical Investigations:

"Let us first discuss this point of the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it.--It is important to note that the word "meaning" is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that 'corresponds' to the word. This is to confound the meaning of a name with the bearer of the name. When Mr. N.N. dies one says the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say that, for if the name ceased to have meaning, it would make no sense to say "Mr. N.N. is dead."(11)

But then if one says that meaning is a "set of rules, etc."; is that not committing the same type of error? It may be noted here that apparently Wittgenstein himself once criticized a student for thus identifying meaning with "rules of use". It may also be of interest to quote Moore:

As to (x) although he had said, at least once, that the meaning of a word was "constituted" by the grammatical rules which applied to it, he explained later that he did not mean that the meaning of a word was a list of rules; and he said that though a word "carried its meaning with", it did not carry with it the grammatical rules which applied to it. He said that the student who had asked him whether he meant that the meaning of a word was a list of rules would not have been tempted to ask that question but for the false idea (which he held to be a common one) that in the case of a substantive like "the meaning" you have to look for something at which you can point and say "This is the meaning". He seemed to think that Frege and Russell had been misled by the same idea, when they thought that they were bound to give an answer to the question "What is the number 2?". As to what he meant by saying that the meaning of a word is "determined by" (this was the phrase he seemed to prefer) the "grammatical rules" in accordance with which it is used, I do not think he explained further what he meant by this phrase.(12)

Nor does it seem that Strawson makes it particularly clear what he means by "is a function of" when he says "meaning is a function of a sentence or expression" or what he means by "is" when he says "meaning is a set of rules".

(2) Can we regard Strawson as discovering the meaning of "meaning" (or "significance")? In one sense one could think that Strawson says: Aha! I now know what the true defining characteristic of meaning is--it is the rules which govern the use of words. Now is this discovering the intrinsic "essence" of meaning or is it finding an important relational aspect?⁽¹³⁾ This latter question needs much more elucidation than it has been given. Most likely a little of both is intended. What is the justification or evidence for the discovery claim? Is it a description of what we ordinarily mean by "significance" or "meaning"? A discovery based on a description of what we ordinarily mean would be hard to justify for then factual evidence would be required. We may ask: How do you know you have made the right discovery?

(3) Is it a stipulation? An arbitrary definition would then be not immune to the very type of criticism that Strawson makes against Russell; namely, that he is not giving a description of what the ordinary use of language is. But there is another problem, one of circularity. For whenever we phrase the stipulation as "the meaning of x is...", we already assume that we know what "meaning" is. Substituting "meaning" for x, we have 'the meaning of "meaning" is...'. What are we to understand by the first

occurrence of "meaning" in the sentence? Does not the second occurrence already assume the first?⁽¹⁴⁾ If we, further, substitute "rules of use" for both occurrences of "meaning" we get: "The rules of use of words" is "the rules of use of words". And this does not seem terribly helpful!

So, although as a definition the talk of use appears to be interesting when we look at the details we find much unclarity as to what the definition amounts to. There is one further point I would like to make about the possibility of defining significance or meaning by means of "rules of use". And this has to do with the fluidity of "rules of use". For one thing the word "meaning" itself is quite ambiguous and, as such, a definition would be a selection, at best, of the many usages and at worst a pragmatic recommendation. But, further, even if one were to make a selection from the variegated usages the problem of "open-texture"⁽¹⁵⁾ of words would still be present. If the concept of "rules of use" includes so much as to embrace such a broad spectrum of usages (or uses?) we would wonder about the usefulness of still talking of rules defining meaning. Wittgenstein had two picturesque illustrations of the fluidity of the use of words:

- (a) Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?--Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"..... And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail. (Remark 66)

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances".... (Remark 67)

Suppose 'meaning' is such a concept as 'game', wouldn't we have to say that there is no essence of 'meaning'? (Remark 65: You talk about all sorts of language-games, but have nowhere said what the essence of a language-game, and hence of language, is: what is common to all these activities....)

- (b) "... Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses." (Remark 18)

Could we not apply the same flexibility to the notion of 'significance'? Could we not then say that to claim that the meaning of a word could be defined as the rules of its use is to exaggerate? Could we not then see in Strawson a domination by the analogy with a logical calculus?⁽¹⁶⁾⁽¹⁷⁾

4.2 His Account Taken as an Attempt to Provide a Criterion

I want to explore the possibility that Strawson is giving a criterion of 'significance'. His intention would be to find some characteristic(s)⁽¹⁸⁾ either essential to language or arbitrarily related to it such that we could separate sense from nonsense, intelligible from unintelligible, understandable from ununderstandable expressions. Does the expression in question display this characteristic or these characteristics? If so it is significant. Whether the characteristics are stipulated or discovered (as an empirical discovery) is not always clear but I think it would be best to suppose that Strawson, if he is giving a criterion, then the characteristics chosen are discovered by an examination of

language, i.e., it is essential to meaningful sentences that they be used in such and such ways. If he is giving a criterion there seems to be at least three different formulations:

- (i) An expression is significant if and only if it is used (to refer, etc.).

One may interpret this to mean that the condition of actual use in a community or group is crucial for acceptance or non-acceptance of an expression as significant.

- (ii) An expression is significant if and only if there are rules, habits or conventions for its use.

There are very many different implications of "rules", "habits", "conventions", etc. For one thing it is hard to say whether "rule" is used in the sense of social rules or public criteria. When Wittgenstein talks about "rules" sometimes he means to use this talk as a polemic against the notion of a private language (i.e., language of pains, etc. can only have public criteria (rules?) for use). Sometimes he wants to compare speaking to playing chess in order to deny that "meaning" is a private process or an object. Sometimes he wants to claim that philosophical language deviates too far from the context in which it is meaningful, i.e., in ordinary activities. And sometimes he wants to contrast it with logical rules of a perfect language (e.g., Principia Mathematica).

Which of these does Strawson mean? In so far as he accuses Russell of not giving a correct account of the use of sentences in ordinary language I think it would be fair to say that Strawson is claiming that language is significant if and only if it is used in the ways of ordinary language and (most likely) in the contexts of ordinary

language.

- (iii) An expression is significant if and only if it could be used or if we could imagine a use for it.

I will comment briefly on each of these formulations:

- (i) Who is informed by the statement that an expression is significant if and only if it is used in a community? For the native speakers this would be rather trivial to say. For a foreigner it is not sufficient to exclude meaningless expressions for an expression may be misused for a rather long period of time and thus leave an observer with the impression that the expression is significant.

By the mere criterion of "use" in a community we may be tempted to say that "unicorns" etc. will not be distinguished by a foreigner since these expressions (like "ghosts", "demons", "substance", etc.) do or may occur in an ordinary language. Further there are often philosophical and scientific words used by ordinary people.

Nor could one say that it is a necessary condition for surely technical language (as in physics, law, etc.) certainly should not be ruled out as being non-significant.

- (ii) The first problem that comes to mind about this criterion is that in many cases it is difficult to tell what the rule is. There is not only the problem of homonyms but also the problem of where to draw the boundary that the rule is supposed to draw.

Even if one takes a paradigm case of a use in which the rule is interpreted then surely there would be the problem of justifying this choice of paradigm. For often one finds a variety of paradigms in language. For example "game" is not applicable only to chess but to various other activities.

There is the more serious problem of the "innovation". If one wants to say something new, will he be committing a crime against language if he were to change the rules of use? Surely this would be to exaggerate the importance of rules and the necessity to adhere to them. When the physicist uses the word "force" in a new way does he not do something rather important? What does the farmer, businessman and other ordinary people care about "mass times acceleration"?

It may even be necessary to relieve a word of some extraneous connotations that the ordinary man imposes on it. Take the word "force" again. This word has (or had) animistic connotations for people (at one time). Should we not say that although there were certainly rules for using the word yet for the scientist these rules were too lax? A scientist may say that the ordinary use of the word force is often meaningless, i.e., the ordinary man doesn't know what he is talking about, that he is confused or has an idiotic frame of reference.

It seems to me that the mere presence of rules of use of a word may not always be a guide to significance nor is significance

necessarily dependent on ordinary rules of use.

Concerning the general criterion, we may say that although ordinary language philosophers wanted to deny Locke's talk of ideas, etc., they certainly sympathized with his general aim, i.e., to set a limit to sensible discourse and this limit was "use in ordinary language" (unlike Locke's "ideas from experience"). But in general one would be inclined to think that the use (usage?) of the ordinary man cannot be a sufficient criterion of intelligibility since there is much that the ordinary man may not be able to discourse about because he has not undertaken to find out about or is not familiar with. If we say that he would speak in such and such ways if he were to speak about abstruse things then I think we are merely propounding a notion for which the ordinary man takes the blame; he cannot be used as a judge since he has not asserted himself to be such.

Much as we may sympathize with the desire to put a limit to intelligibility yet we cannot sincerely believe that the use of language of the ordinary man can be of much assistance in cases that are most important.

(iii) When Strawson says that a condition for expression being significant is that we should be able to imagine a use for it or imagine rules for its use, we may want to ask, Why is it better to say that we can imagine a use, rather than we can imagine an object or thing to which the expression may refer?

In any case we can always imagine things like "the present king of

France" now, in the twenty-first century or any other time. Actually it is not at all difficult to imagine that there is, in one sense or another, a present king of France now (e.g., if France is/were a monarchy) or that there is a unicorn in Edmonton, etc., etc. As a matter of fact it seems rather easier to imagine unicorns, Martians, a present king of France, etc. than to imagine rules for using these words or phrases. It seems an artificial way of speaking to say that we imagine uses or rules of use whereas it seems quite natural to say we imagine strange objects, etc.

4.3 The Concept of Use as an Explanation

It seems clear that it is generally thought that the concept of 'use' somehow illuminates the concepts of 'significance'. What I want to argue is that, in some sense of "explanation", Strawson may intend his account to be taken as an explanation of how words are significant. In this section I want to raise the question: How exactly may the appeal to use be said to explain how words are significant?

Crucial to Strawson's answer is the distinction between "expressions" and "uses of expressions". It is expressions that are significant. What is the basis for this distinction? How are we to be persuaded that expressions per se as marks on paper are significant? What is meant by "significant"?

The clue, it seems to me, to understanding what Strawson has in mind is in the notion of "use". Although it is fraught with ambiguity (at least I find it unclear) yet there seems little

doubt to me that it is not merely an innovation in language; he is not merely saying the same thing as Meinong, or Russell but only this time talking of "use" rather than the old terminology of "standing for", etc. What he seems to have in mind is a sort of analogy with other things used. For instance, a hammer has a use. The hammer is significant and its uses proper or improper.

Now it may be objected that I have put too much weight on the mere occurrence of a word and a distinction. But, in fact, three philosophers seem also to read Strawson the way I am interpreting him. They are:

- (1) R. Harre⁽¹⁹⁾ in Introduction to the Logic of Science cites Strawson when he compares words to tools.
- (2) J.L. Evans⁽²⁰⁾ in "Meaning and Verification" (MIND 1953) cites Strawson approvingly and then goes on to press the analogy between words and tools quite explicitly:

"Similarly, we may regard words as tools which we use to do a certain job, e.g., to make an assertion, issue a command or pose a question, and we must avoid the error of regarding tools as being in the same category as the completed job."

- (3) D. Mitchell⁽²¹⁾ in An Introduction to Logic (a book in which many of Strawson's views are criticized) seems to deny that words are tools but rather words may be a medium of understanding. Since he is concerned to criticize Strawson's views I think it is fair to say that he attributes to Strawson the view that words are or are like tools.

In any event, the analogy between words and tools or instruments is

common in "ordinary language" philosophy. Gilbert Ryle in his well-known article "Ordinary Language"⁽²²⁾ makes many comparisons with tools or instruments--fish--knives, spygmanometers, tennis rackets, boots, money, etc.

Wittgenstein himself compared words to tools (or even said they were tools):

- (1) It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of tools in language and of the ways they are used. (Remark 23)
- (2) Look at the word "to think" as a tool. (Remark 360)
- (3) Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment. (Remark 421)
- (4) Language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments (Remark 569).
- (5) This does not make the propositions "He is much depressed", " $25 \times 25 = 625$ " and "I am sixty years old" into similar instruments. (Page 224)

Now it is difficult to summarize all the purposes Wittgenstein had in mind for making the analogy or for saying that "language is an instrument" (Remark 569). How far he wanted to explain "significance" by this analogy is hard to determine. We may suppose, however, that we can interpret the talk of "use" and "tools" as in some way giving an explanation. This is the general basis of Strawson's claim. But exactly what is meant or how we are clearer about "significance" is difficult to understand.

(Many other thinkers and philosophers including Hobbes⁽²³⁾, Samuel Butler⁽²⁴⁾, A.M. McIver⁽²⁵⁾ and to a certain extent B. Malinowski⁽²⁶⁾

seem to make use of the tool or instrument model for words.)

What is the form of the explanation and what is being explained by the discovery (?) that words are tools or are like tools? To begin with the second question, we should note that the concept of 'use' and the notion that sentences must be divorced from their uses, are offered as part of a polemic with the traditional Correspondence Theory of Meaning⁽²⁷⁾ or Relational Theory of Meaning⁽²⁸⁾ (29)(30)(31). What is claimed in effect is something like this:

To understand language we don't have to postulate or bring in psychological notions like ideas, intentions, etc. We no more have to talk of mental processes in understanding language than we have to in understanding the use of tools. This would avoid the problems of Meinong or Locke. Also it would forestall the very temptation either to postulate "queer" meanings (in another world) or identify meaning with psychological processes⁽³²⁾.

Together with this Ryle (and even, it seems, Wittgenstein) adopted some sort of Behaviorist account of how we understand language-- according to Ryle it is merely a matter of "drills and skills"⁽³³⁾.

Ryle says in "Ordinary Language":

"Learning how to manage a canoe-paddle, a travellers cheque or a postage stamp, is not being introduced to an extra entity. Nor is learning how to manage the words 'if', 'ought', and 'limit'."⁽³⁴⁾

How much of this sort of view can we attribute to Strawson? One may say he is not necessarily committed to anything other philosophers have said but it is hard not to think that when he attacks the old theory of meaning he deviates far from the grounds offered

by his sympathizers. When Strawson says we "know" the meaning of a word, what does he mean? Keeping in mind that he said that expressions are used, that we know rules for using them and implies that expressions are something like tools, I don't think we could avoid attributing to him the view that words are understood like tools are understood (and this is a matter of "habit" or "disposition".) 85, 86, 87, 88

In what sense or senses can we say that the concept of use is offered as an explanation? There are quite a few possibilities since the concept of explanation itself is rather vague. (39)(40)(41)

Generally speaking when one explains something he makes what is complicated, difficult, strange more intelligible, familiar or more understandable. (42) This may be done in a variety of ways; but for our purposes I think only three are relevant: deductive, analogical and genetic. In a deductive explanation (the explanandum) can be subsumed under a general category or law, i.e., its properties are deducible from the properties of a wider class of phenomena that includes the explanandum. In an analogical explanation one makes the explanandum (analogandum?) more understandable or intelligible by pointing out similarities it has with another phenomenon with the implicit assumption that the other phenomenon is familiar and readily intelligible. It is supposed that the relevant characteristics are possessed by the analog also. (42b)

The genetic explanation gives an account of the development of something especially in terms of chronological development paying

special attention to the context of arisal, the conditions and unique processes of arisal. For example one may ask: What is man? In answer one may say that he is an animal which developed into a rational being. Or one may ask: What is human understanding? In answer one may try to give an account of the complex development of understanding in the child or in the race making distinctions between different types of understanding, etc. A genetic explanation often gives a better perspective of the problem at hand. For example we may say that to say that words are tools is to make a hypothesis about the development of language, i.e., an anthropological hypothesis--mankind's learning language and using tools are logically connected. But since I am not at all sure that this direction of explanation is intended, I will ignore it.

4.4 The Explanation as a Deduction

I will put most stress on the analogy between words and tools because I think that this is the main emphasis. However it will be useful to explore the deductive form of the explanation.

What would be the deductive form of the explanation? It would run something like this:

All tools are significant (or understandable?),

Words are tools,

Therefore, words are significant.

This has a charmingly simple ring and seems quite persuasive at first encounter. For are we not very familiar with tools? What is the fuss and bother about complicated notions like "ideas",

"intentions", "correspondence", etc.? How do we understand language?

Very simply--just as we understand the use of any other tools

But this is a rather audacious thing to do--banish centuries of discussion and confusion by a mere deduction! Naturally we would want to object that there must be something wrong, that surely things are not that obvious. And, in fact, I think that such doubts are justified. Apart from the question whether words are tools one may, with justification, be puzzled about how he understands the use of tools. Is this to be regarded as too obvious to need argument or clarification? Is it that only "idiots and babes in arms" would not "see" how tools are significant? What guarantee is there that the old questions would not arise again? We may say that, in one sense, the older philosophers can maintain their questions but only shift their language--instead of talking about mental acts, etc., about entities we refer to, they would now talk about use of the tools to name or refer to them. To the extent that there is a new claim to the same extent there is a new concept of how we understand or learn. I have already hinted what the new concept involves (dispositions, etc.). But we must be emphatic on the point that without some account of how we understand the use of other tools, we are not terribly informed when we are told that words are tools and are significant in the same way other tools are.

4.5 The Explanation as an Analogy

Let us suppose the explanation is by analogy. We may phrase the analogy thus:

be called the "Paradox of Analogies", for on the one hand analogs may be classified as too simple to be helpful and on the other too complicated.⁽⁴³⁾ In Empirical Semantics terminology we may say that on the one hand the analog is too audacious to be helpful and on the other too trivial.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Like Alice in Wonderland, who was either too short or too tall when she ate the mushrooms, the analog never quite suits!

This problem occurs in trying to explain how words are significant by comparing them to tools, for on the one hand if we choose certain "tools" (e.g., knives) as analogs it is quite hard to see how they explain, and on the other hand if we choose certain other analogs (e.g., money), it becomes too evident for the analog is almost as complicated as words themselves.

4.6 Problems with the Analogy with Tools or Instruments

Before I proceed to argue that the analogy with tools or instruments won't do, let us look at the formulation "to use x". I want to point out some ambiguities and cases of assimilation that are often overlooked and which need greater clarification.

- 4.6(i) What values for "x" can we substitute in "to use x"? It is well-known that a great variety of values can be substituted. Not only "hammers", "knives" and "chess-pieces" but also the following: water, ice, the human body, democracy, the church, the rites, marble, fire, firewood, oxygen, music, grass, clay, the human stomach, parts of the plant (e.g., stomata are used for photosynthesis), ambassadors, the judiciary, soldiers, cricket

In all important and relevant respects,

Words are like tools;

Tools are significant (or understandable);

Therefore, words must be significant (or understandable) as
tools are significant.

As in the deductive explanation we may ask: But is it obvious how tools are significant? At first to many this does indeed seem obvious. But I don't think it is. (Again I mention that, in any case, a particular view of understanding is implied.)

There is a general problem connected with analogies that is particularly relevant to this one. In what sense can it explain? For consider a case where the analog (i.e., that which explains, the familiar part of the analogy) is very simple, i.e., it is obviously understandable. For instance suppose we want to explain to a person how a motor car engine works. We say a car is a machine something like a bicycle. The virtue of this analogy is that the analog is very simple (for who doesn't understand how a bicycle works?). But the trouble is that it is too simple; so simple in fact that it misrepresents or avoids the issue of how a motor car engine works. At the other extreme one may say that a motor-car engine is something like a motor-boat engine or an aeroplane engine. But the trouble with this is that if a person did know how a motor-boat engine works he wouldn't have trouble with how a motor-car engine works. For these types of engines are too much the same. In fact the motor-boat engine needs as much explaining as the motor-car engine. Here we have what might

bats, psychology, intelligence, the human brain, man-power, the Word of God, influence, affluence, good taste, good etiquette, good form, technique, science, university education, etc. etc. etc.

We may also point out that Websters Dictionary gives these alternatives of "to use":

1(a) to follow

(b) to practise

(c) to make familiar

2 to put into action or service

(a) to use language ("only 40,000 use that dialect")

(b) to consume (liquor)

(c) to have sexual relations with

3 to carry out a purpose, by means of, make instrumental to an end or purpose;

Synonyms: Employ, Utilize, Apply, Avail.

The "grammar" or "logic" of the word "use" is in as much need of clarification as any other word.⁽⁴⁵⁾ If we remind ourselves of what Wittgenstein said about "games"⁽⁴⁶⁾ and "family resemblances"⁽⁴⁷⁾ we may come to think that the concept of use is by no means simple or definite (not even a "family resemblance").

4.6(ii) I want to show how different concepts may have been assimilated under the name "use". Strawson, Ryle, Flew and many others are not at all careful to distinguish between the various implications of the word use. They talk of "use", "function", "rôle", "jobs", "employment", etc. of a piece of language. By even a casual

examination of a modest-sized dictionary as the Concise Oxford we find the following radical distinctions:

- (a) job: piece of work; especially one done for hire or profit, etc.
- (b) function: activity proper to anything, mode of action by which it fulfills its purpose; office-holder's duty, employment, profession, calling, etc.
- (c) use: using, employment, application to a purpose, etc. (as file)
- (d) rôle: active part; one's function, what one is appointed or expected or has undertaken to do.

A person performs a function, plays a rôle, uses an instrument, does a job, but each of these may be quite different. I will suggest some distinctions that one may want to make.

(a) In some ways (a) and (b) are related. Policemen, barbers, lawyers, pipefitters, etc. do jobs which are recognizeable. In one sense they perform "functions" in society. They are (in some sense) "institutions". For the sake of simplicity I will not press the distinction between "job" and "function" for I want to contrast "function" and "use" (as of instruments).

(b) "Function" is related to "rôle" as used in sociology. In this sense only "agents" or human beings perform in "rôles". An agent is active; he discharges duties, has powers and is distinguishable from patient and instrument. (Of course an agent in a sense is also an instrument as a teacher is an instrument of the School Board or society or "historical forces"(??)).

"Function" is also used in sociology. Every part of the organic whole of society has a "function" in keeping the whole in equilibrium.^(48,49) In biology and physiology also one speak of certain parts of an organism having certain functions.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Or in connection with machines one talks of the "function" of the gas-pedal or carburator, for example.

Can such concepts be adapted to the study of language? They may be but one should not be deceived by superficial adaptations. For one thing language does not exist "in nature" as other things to be examined and explained. The concepts of "observation" and "explanation" would have to be clarified for it seems that many philosophers who claim "functions", etc. don't seem to have to go out and make systematic observations. Does one also give teleological explanations for "functions" of words? What is the relationship between the whole language and its parts? To press these questions in detail would (most likely) show the difficulties one encounters in talking of the "functions" of words. (The above comments are only made because one finds some difficulty in knowing what "use" means.)

4.6(iii) Assimilation of Instrument and Medium

(c) There is no doubt that when ordinary language philosophers talk of "use" they quite often mean "use" in the sense of using instruments or tools. But there are important differences even here. As a matter of fact the danger of assimilation is even greater here as I will now try to show. There is a contrast in

the sense of 'use' when one uses words as an instrument which is contingently related to the user and the sense of use in which the thing used is logically related to the user in the sense that language is a medium or vehicle. This distinction, many people believe, is very important.⁽⁵⁰⁾⁽⁵¹⁾

For these two views have different implications for a theory of cognition and in some ways one may even say that they are mutually incompatible. On the one hand, there are some who claim that there can be thought without language and some even go so far as to say that language is only incidentally related to thought, as, perhaps, knives are related to a string to be severed. Any other means of severance could be used (e.g., hammer, chisel, force at both ends pulling away from one another, etc.). Now of course we have to keep in mind that few people want to say that language is not at all related to thoughts but the instrumental theory seems to be held by many, e.g., Butler⁽⁵³⁾, Hobbes⁽⁵⁴⁾, McIver⁽⁵⁵⁾, etc. People already think before they use language and they discover that language is one instrument to reveal to society the private thoughts lodged in one's breast (to use Locke's quaint phrase).

On the other hand, there are many people who think that without language there can be no thought, that 'ratio est oratio'. People otherwise as diverse in their views as J.B. Watson⁽⁵⁶⁾ (who seemed to have thought that thinking is sub-vocalizing behavior) and Max Müller⁽⁵⁷⁾ (who claimed that only those who have language can be said to have ideas and thus think) claim that thinking and language

are inseparable. Of course there are many distinctions that these authors make but I think this is the general drift of what they say. B.L. Whorf⁽⁵⁸⁾ is well-known for his theory of the influence of the structure of a language on the categories of thought of a culture. Sapir⁽⁵⁹⁾ has said similar things, e.g.,

"Language is a guide to social reality.... it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in a world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of a particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society."

Note the word "medium" in the above quotation.

Another quotation, this time from Whorf, will show the contrast between the "instrumentalist" view of language and the "medium" view:

"... that the linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individuals mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade... We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages."⁽⁶⁰⁾

4.7 The Analogy with Tools: Hand-tools, Chess-pieces and Money

In the two previous sections I have dealt with some difficulties in the concept of use itself. In the following sections, I want to do something similar with the instrument or tool analogy. By detailed comparison with respect to structure, function and how we understand (intelligibility) I want to argue that to assimilate words with hand-tools or money would be to make a mistake. Further it is a mistake to put money and hand-tools in the same category.

In so far as the analogy with money is good, the function of money is such that some of the same problems can occur for it as for words. Finally an attempt will be made to point out the unique factors in language which themselves are so different from other things that an explanation by analogy can only cover up distinctions which are best kept distinct. The classical problems of how we can refer to absent and non-existent things are still unsolved. A suggestion that we understand language in the same way as we understand the use of other objects is not helpful since it is still controversial how we understand the use of other objects and whether the same abilities or dispositions are involved (if language-using is a habit) is not clear.

4.7 (i) The Analogy with Hand-tools

I will by-pass consideration of the distinctions between different types of hand-tools. I will take a "knife" as the paradigm of all hand-tools. Ryle⁽⁶²⁾ mentions quite a few, including boots, fish-knives and spygmanometers.

a. It is clear that structurally, or as physical phenomena, expressions and knives differ. For instance there are no two-dimensional knives. Words are made up of letters which are adjacent to one another. Words are usually written or spoken. This doesn't mean to say that expressions couldn't be carved out in rock or in little pieces of plastic as on some menu-cards. But it is strange to say that a word has a sharp enough edge, or this expression is too heavy or too dull or needs fixing or should be

polished, etc. Now I am not saying it may never happen that the need will arise for saying these things some day, but as things stand now we don't say such things. Whatever else may be the case I think it is safe to say that it is not worthwhile to compare the physical characteristics of expressions and tools.

b. What has often been worthwhile, however, (it seems), has been the comparison between the use of words and the use of tools like knives. There are "stock" uses, "regular" uses, "habits", "conventions" in using tools; and so of words. But here again there are differences. An effective use of a tool is a result of its natural characteristics--it can be used because it has a sharp point, etc., and as a result it may be used regularly. The manufacturer of a tool may have to conform to government standards in manufacture. Lists of rules of use may be specified with the sale of the tool but regular uses of it depend nevertheless on what it is naturally fitted to do. A use of an object with a particular weight and shape for a certain purpose is a necessity whereas the choice of a particular word has something to do with human convention.

Another difficulty in comparing the use of words with the use of tools is the one of homonyms.⁽⁶³⁾ A "word" that has a different use may become a different word. For instance, "mark" may be something written but it may also be a coin. We call this "ambiguity". Can there be such ambiguity in the use of knives? It is difficult to

see how this is possible. Whatever we do with a knife, it still remains the same knife. But not so with words; "bank", (as in bank of a river) is not the same word as "bank" as in business.

In a general way we may also say that the more efficient tool is the one with which we can do more things; but for words this would lead to confusion. The more homonyms there are the less efficient would communication be.

As I see it the biggest problem with the analogy between the function (or use?) of a tool and of language has to do with the difference between (a) a simple action like cutting a piece of string and (b) making a statement which seems to be an activity of a different order. "Saying", "referring", "describing" etc. are totally different from "cutting a piece of string", "cutting open a fruit", "stabbing an animal", etc. It is not necessary that a being who has a "disposition" to do (a) will have a "disposition" to do (b), (to use Ryle's term). A symbolic act, an act of "representing" one thing by another is far more complex than an act like cutting a piece of string in two.

c. Because of the qualitative difference between the use of words and the use of tools like knives it would be rather difficult to see how one could ever explain how words are significant by an analogy with tools.

What would it mean to say that tools are intelligible or significant or understandable? Could they be intelligible only when properly

used? But surely tools that are improperly used are nevertheless intelligible if even in a different way. What is it for a tool to be misused? If a person uses a tool then I want to say that he is using it (skilfully or not) but every use is a "bona fide" use. If it is used it can be used; if it is good or bad use so much the worse for it but this has little to do with intelligibility or significance or whatever else one wants to say. The case may be quite different for words since there may be "nonsense" or non-intelligibility. (But even here when a person says something he most likely wants to say something however odd sounding his locution might be⁽⁶⁴⁾.)

But there is another way of interpreting "significant" or "intelligible". We must remember that part of the program of "ordinary language" philosophers is to deny that there are mentalistic implications in saying that words are significant or intelligible. They say that when we "understand" language⁽⁶⁵⁾ (when it is intelligible or significant), there is no need to talk about ideas (as Locke) or intentions (like Meinong) but rather of dispositions etc. Ryle, for instance, implies that there is no more difficulty (or implications) in learning language than there is in learning how to use a canoe.⁽⁶⁶⁾

But this line of explanation is only one. Gestalt⁽⁶⁷⁾ psychologists have another view. They would say that being able to use tools depends on insight, not only on "drills and skills". We understand what things are used "for" in context.

Whatever account (Gestalt, Behaviorist, Neo-Behaviorist), one may give of the understanding of "tools" it is difficult to see how one understands language in the same way as one understands the use of hand-tools. It was already mentioned that "saying" or "referring" are not at all the same as "picking an apple" or "cutting a string in two". For the level of "abstraction" or "mentality" required seem to be both in advancement and in quality, quite different.

With words we can bring to the awareness of others apples that are absent⁽⁶⁹⁾, non-existent (have been or will be), etc. And it is precisely this ability (to talk about non-existents) that has generated so many problems. To talk "with thinking" is to talk about both things "present" and "absent". It is to "state facts", "mention", "refer", etc., all complex actions. Furthermore it seems that the ability to speak is a UNIQUE ability and irreducible and UNASSIMILABLE to other abilities. Attempts at reducing language-behavior to the general pattern of stimulus-response behavior have not been entirely successful. Morris⁽⁷⁰⁾ attempt and Mowrer's⁽⁷¹⁾ have been criticized⁽⁷²⁾. It seems that the correlation between those able to use tools (even tokens are used by chimpanzees⁽⁷³⁾) and those able to speak is not perfect. Using tools like knives seems to be much too elementary, much too simple to be of any use in explaining how we understand language.

To summarize: Neither in structure, use nor manner of intelligibility does it seem that words are like tools.

4.7(ii) The Analogy with Chess-pieces

There are many similarities between chess-pieces and words. Chess-pieces have allotted rôles or functions: they are rule-governed. "King" does not refer only to a colored piece of such and such a shape but to the thing that has such and such powers, bound by such and such rules, etc. It is meaningful or intelligible only in terms of the rôle it plays in the whole game. Wittgenstein seems to hold some such view in various places. (Investigations Remark 108: "What is a word really?" is analogous to "What is a piece in chess?")

One pre-requisite however is to be able to play games in general and this is often overlooked. It has deep implications; for, the ability to make, change, discover strategies, etc., is an essential human ability not only a matter of "drills and skills". Next one may consider matters of conventions, etc., which display well the fact that chess-pieces are quite different from and more sophisticated than "knives", "fish-hooks", etc.

Now in what way is "using a chess-piece" or "playing a game" with a chess-piece like "using language"? In both, it is said, there are rules. But this can be exaggerated. The rules of language are not nearly as rigid or restricted as in chess. Chess may well be compared with logical calculi but not as well with ordinary language which, as has so often been said, is open-textured. To break the rules of chess is in a sense not to play or refuse to play that game but not so in language. To change the rule is often

indistinguishable from breaking the rule and often this is necessary.

If we say "don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use" of a chess-piece there is no problem: we don't anyway. But not so with words: people do ask for the meaning of words. In other words to assimilate words with chess-pieces is to do violence to certain important "functions" of words (which chess-pieces don't have) and that is to be symbols of other states of affairs. However words are connected with other things in the world, the fact is they are connected in some way and in this way words are quite different from chess-pieces which are significant only as a part of the game. So again the unique problems of language may not be so easily done away with by merely saying that words are like chess-pieces. At least I find it quite difficult to see how they are avoided.

4.7(iii) The Analogy with Money

Money, as an analog for words, offers interesting suggestions. It is no wonder, then, that philosophers and non-philosophers alike, have, for various reasons, likened words to money. Hobbes (words are the counters of wise men, but the money of fools), Bacon, Berkeley, Samuel Butler⁽⁷⁴⁾ (It is astonishing how closely in this respect (i.e., "voluntary application of a recognized token") money and words resemble one another), Wittgenstein (Investigations Remark 120), Ryle⁽⁷⁵⁾, H.H. Price⁽⁷⁶⁾ (when we think by means of words alone, as of course we often do, the theory says we are using symbols in which I will call an uncashed manner, without being aware

at the moment of what we mean. It is like using cheques or paper money as a substitute for gold), and many others find the analogy quite charming. Words are used, over-used, misused (i.e., used as if it had value when it had none); the money model suggests counterfeit words just as there is counterfeit money. Perhaps one may even talk about periods of inflation of words just as there are inflationary cycles in business.

Let me point out some differences before I say that words are too much like money. Words are not hoarded. People don't buy or get groceries on the strength of their ability to talk well and plentifully. Money is a symbol of property and exchange-value. Money is used to buy and sell whereas words are used to refer, state facts, tell jokes, etc.

It would be interesting to investigate the relationship between "indicating", "naming" and "referring" and "exchanging, "using tokens" and "using money".

But the trouble with this analogy is that it is too close: certain novel features of money (as against fish-hooks and knives) are such that some of the same problems recur for money as for words.

Ryle⁽⁷⁷⁾ says at one place that:

To say, therefore, that philosophy is the science of meanings, though not altogether wrong, is liable to mislead in the same way as it might mislead to say that economics is the science of exchange-values. This, too, is true enough, but to word this truth in this way is liable to make people suppose that the Universe houses, under different roofs, commodities and coins here and exchange-values over there.

But if this much is admitted, if we can indeed ask for "exchange

valued" as we ask for "meanings", then do we not also admit that the same relevant problems occur for money as they do for words? Could we not imagine a person asking, a la Meinong, how do we understand reference to exchange-values? Could we not make transactions about things that have ceased to exist? How can we do this?

Consider, further, a being who is able to speak but is unfamiliar with money. Having learnt what money is the being asks: "What are exchange values?" "How can money stand for cabbages, kings, pigs, salt indiscriminately?" "How can I save my money and buy things twenty years from now?" "How do we learn how to use money?" "How can we understand the use of money?" And finally, "How is money significant?"

There is one further serious difficulty. Most coins have marks on them. Some of these marks are mere indentations on metal (or pictures on paper) to identify one coin from another very readily. But some of the other marks are what we would call words--"crown", "half-crown", "dollar", etc., and these are parts of language. When one asks for the meaning of "half-crown" what does one ask for? For a piece of metal? Or what the piece of metal stands for? If one is puzzled about what the word stands for, one may also be puzzled about what the piece of metal stands for. The distinctions here are very difficult to explicate if explication is even possible.

We are left with the impression that language is very much involved

in the use of coins--so much so, indeed, that there may be much difficulty in separating one from the other. Even if we were able to separate the functions of money and language yet the questions as to how we can deal with non-existent things crop up.

How, then, can we say that the analogy with money explains how words are significant? One may hazard the guess that one has the feeling of understanding. Money is a familiar and one generally has little difficulty in buying and selling with money. Everybody can do it. But we must not let this sense of familiarity deceive us into thinking that there are no problems with money. The ordinary man (and, in this sense, at most times, we are all ordinary men) may not see any problem. But the ordinary man sees no problem with words either. (In other words, I suggest, that there is as little problem for words as there is for money, for the ordinary man.)

But, in so far as philosophers have thought that there are certain problems of how words in general are significant, we cannot help but think that similar problems occur for money. At least it doesn't seem to be greater or less nonsense to ask some of the same questions about money as Meinong and other philosophers asked about words.

One unhappily concludes that the analogy with money does not really help us to understand how words are significant.

4.8 Summary of the Explanation as Analogical

The main objection concerning the analogy with other things used

that none of these other things seem to be suitable to explain how words are significant. In some cases (hand-tools, chess-pieces), the relevant and important features of language also are absent, whereas in the case where these features are present (money) we find it possible to ask some of the same troubling questions as we ask about words.

These difficulties were brought up by detailed (and tedious) inquiry. But there is an interesting general and theoretical way that this objection may be stated: In so far as the analog is simple and uncomplicated (audacious?) the analog y fails to explain; in so far as the analog is just as complicated as the analogandum it also fails to explain. In the one case the analog lacks the relevant features and in the other possesses too much of it.

I don't want to suggest that analogies don't explain at all. One way in which they explain is by familiarity. That is, it is supposed that if you say that a Ford car works just like a Dodge, the person to whom you are explaining knows full well how a Dodge car works. He knows about the workings of a gas-engine (the mechanism of a gas explosion creating a pressure which exerts a force on a piston, etc.). But if the person does not know this already and it is this sort of thing that bothers him, then to tell him that a Ford car works like a Dodge is useless and trivial.

Another way analogies may explain is in cases like the ones we find in physics. For instance the flow of a gas or an electric current

may be compared to the flow of water. Such a structural analogy, as between a gas and water, may be very helpful for predicting the behavior of gases.

But the analogy we have been considering does not rest on the type of familiarity as in the example of the motor car nor on the type of structural model as in science. The characteristic of "significance" is not a structural characteristic. Nor can we say that money is significant and take this to be already thoroughly understood. This was precisely what was to be explained. The question of significance remains just as much a problem for money as for words.

CONCLUSION

Considering the difficulties of traditional theories of meaning (as we find them in the Meinong-Russell controversy), it is understandable that Strawson should try to confine himself to talking of significance of words and sentences, where "words" and "sentences" refer only to marks on paper.

I have dealt with some of the difficulties encountered (a) when attempting to make sense of such a concept 'significance', and (b) when attempting to explicate the more or less explicitly introduced auxiliary model (analogy) of "words being like tools".

At the end of this thesis, I am forced to the rather pessimistic conclusion that neither is the new use of "significance" clarified nor has the promising analogy itself dispelled the difficulties encountered in the original problem-cluster of Meinong and Russell. In some ways the analogy may even have added to the confusion.

NOTES

Introduction

- (1) John Passmore, One Hundred Years of Philosophy, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1957, p. 453
- (2) P.F. Strawson, "On Referring", Mind, 1950, reprinted in A. Flew (ed.): Essays in Conceptual Analysis, 1956, London, Macmillan & Co., pp. 21ff.
- (3) B. Russell, "On Denoting", Mind, 1905, reprinted in H. Feigl and W. Sellars, Readings in Philosophical Analysis, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., 1949, p. 103.
- (4) B. Russell, "Mr. Strawson on Referring", Mind, 1957, pp. 385ff.
- (5) I use Russell's term 'proposition' for the time being. I use, also, Hempel's notation in punctuating: single quotation marks for what is said to be a proposition and double quotation marks for what is said to be a sentence.
- (6) Is it based on logical, grammatical or ordinary language intuition? Is it justified by epistemological considerations? Or is it merely an artificial (heuristic) consideration in "interpreting" the sentence? Much depends on what basis one chooses. See Chapter 2.
- (7) "On Referring", in Flew, p. 33. See Prof. H. Tennessen "What Should We Say?", Inquiry, Vol. 2, 1959. An empirical investigation revealed that many people would (do) say true or false to the sentence in question (in ordinary language, i.e., ordinary language speakers). See Chapter 3.
- (8) "On Denoting", in Feigl & Sellars, p. 107.
- (9) Strawson does not use this example himself but it is clear that he regards "the present king of France is wise" as being similar to this. P.T. Geach (Analysis, 1949, p. 84), who also said the question of truth or falsity does not arise, used this example and made virtually the same accusations as Strawson. Note that the most general objection to Strawson's interpretation would be that one can't say whether the proposition is true or false outside a given context. In effect I am specifying one possible type of context. There may be many others.
- (10) "On Referring", in Flew, p. 28.
- (11) Ibid., p. 30.
- (12) There is considerable difficulty in knowing what the question means. See Chapter 2.

- (13) "On Referring", in Flew, p. 30.
- (14) Ibid., p. 32.
- (15) Ibid., p. 31
- (16) G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures of 1930-33", Mind, January, 1954.
- (17) G. Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning", in Max Black, The Importance of Language, Spectrum Books, 1962, p. 161ff.
- (18) See Chapter 2, Section 2.26; also B. Russell, Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, London, Allen & Unwin, 1919. A name is a "simple symbol directly designating an individual which is its meaning,..." p. 174.
- (19) "On Referring", p. 31.
- (20) For "definition" c.f. J. Hospers Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1953.
- (21) Hospers, p. 51-52.
- (22) It is not clear how to regard "criterion" in "Ordinary Language" philosophy; I suppose, here, that some sort of "criterion" is intended for separating significant from non-significant sentences in the manner of the Logical Positivists.
- (23) C.f. "Explanation" in Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., N.Y., 1961, p. 20ff. Also John Hospers, Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, (op. cit.), p. 177.
- (24) E. Nagel, The Structure of Science, p. 46. Also J. Hospers, Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, p. 353-355.
- (25) Gilbert Ryle, "Ordinary Language", Philosophical Review, 1954. Also "The Theory of Meaning", in Max Black, The Importance of Language, Spectrum Books, Prentice-Hall, N.J. 1962, p. 147ff.
- (26) Morton White has interpreted "meaningful" (significant) in this way, in philosophers of the early part of the twentieth century. There is no reason to doubt that this is true for philosophers of today also. See his Toward Reunion in Philosophy, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, p. 36.
- (27) C.p. note 21 above.
- (28) On the concept of "assimilation" c.f. L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Basil & Blackwell, 1953. E.G., p. 6e ("But assimilating the descriptions of the uses of words in this way cannot make the uses themselves any more like one another." Remark 10.) Also Crawshay-Williams (note 31 below) pp. 74ff.

- (29) After this thesis was written I discovered that D.F. Pears, in his article "Universals", in A.Flew, Logic and Language (Second Series), Oxford, Blackwell, 1953, has argued against traditional theories of universals using a similar line of argument as my general (theoretical) argument against the analogy with other things used. Pears says: I now turn to my second thesis that nothing is sufficiently like naming without being too like naming. (p. 58). What is needed in order to explain the peculiar persistence of the debate about universals is something slightly larger, a demonstration that no analogy can be sufficiently close to satisfy philosophers without being too close. (p. 59). But, if the first process was too natural to be like naming, the second is too artificial, since, for the analogy to work, etc. (p. 60). And what more are the rival theories of naming doing than seeking a completely satisfactory analogy? (p.61).
- (30) Samuel Butler, "Language and Thought", in Max Black, The Importance of Language (op. cit.), p. 13ff.
- (31) As is suggested in Chapter 2 of this thesis, it is quite possible that philosophers interpret one another in unfriendly ways (e.g., the interpretations of the Idealist and phenomenologists by Logical Atomists and 'Ordinary Language' Philosophers.) It is interesting to note what Rupert Crawshay-Williams has said: Controversy then arises when A's line of thought makes him take particular notice of some purpose for which the answer is correct, while B's line of thought makes him take particular notice of a purpose for which the answer is incorrect. Since A and B both assume that there is one universal context (or rather since it never occurs to either of them that purpose and context are relevant to their question), each assumes that the other's view is contradictory of his own, while at the same time finding this apparently contradictory view uncomfortably plausible. Methods and Criteria of Reasoning, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957, p. 94-95.
- (32) C.f. discussions in the writings of Professor H. Tennessen, e.g., "Permissible and Impermissible Locutions", Synthese, Vol. XII, No. 4, December 1960.
- (33) It is not suggested that the theory examined is entirely without merit. The talk of "use" has been a fruitful avenue of research (as far as I understand it) and most likely has many further good implications. I am merely concerned in this thesis to explore the relationship between significance and use, and within the context in which I write I find certain difficulties.

Chapter I

- (1) P.F. Strawson "On Referring", reprinted in A. Flew Essays in Conceptual Analysis, London, Macmillan and Co., 1956, p. 23. All future references to "On Referring" will be to this reprint.
- (2) Ibid., p. 23.
- (3) B. Russell, "On Denoting" in Feigl & Sellars, Readings in Philosophical Analysis, N.Y., Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949, p. 106. All future references to "On Denoting" will be made to this reprint.
- (4) Ibid. p. 106.
- (5) See Chapter 2, p. 45.
- (6) "On Denoting", p. 107.
- (7) "On Denoting", p. 108.
- (8) G. Frege, "On Sense and Nomination" in Feigl & Sellars Readings in Philosophical Analysis, p. 95.
- (9) Ibid. p. 95.
- (10) "On Denoting", p. 109.
- (11) "On Denoting", p. 107.
- (12) Ibid, p. 107.
- (13) B. Russell, "Mr. Strawson on Referring", Mind, 1957, p. 387. (See note 9 to the Introduction.)
- (14) See Chapter 2, Section 2.31.
- (15) "On Denoting", p. 103.
- (16) Ibid., p. 103.
- (17) Max Black, Language and Philosophy, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1949, pp. 109ff.
- (18) B. Russell, Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, London, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 89 ff.
- (19) "On Denoting", p. 103.

- (20) B. Russell, Problems of Philosophy, London, William & Norgate, 1912, p. 91.
- (21) See Chapter 2, Section 2.31.
- (22) See note 1.
- (23) "On Referring", p. 26.
- (24) Ibid., p. 31.
- (25) P. Strawson, Introduction to Logical Theory, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952, pp. 176ff.
- (26) P. Strawson, Individuals, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1957, pp. 199ff.
- (27) C.f. Section 1.2 above.
- (28) P.T. Geach, "Russell's Theory of Descriptions", Analysis, 1949, pp. 84ff.
- (29) "On referring", p. 35.
- (30) Op. cit. (Note 25), p. 185.
- (31) "On Referring", p. 33.
- (32) Ibid., p. 30.

Chapter II

- (1) Concise Oxford Dictionary. Webster's Twentieth-Century Dictionary says on 'significance': 1. Meaning; import; that which is intended to be expressed. 2. The real import of anything, as opposed to that which appears; the internal and true sense, as contradistinguished from the external and partial. 3. Expressiveness; impressiveness; force; power of impressing the mind; as, a duty enjoined with particular 'significance'. And on 'significant': 1. Bearing a meaning; expressing or containing signification or sense; as, a 'significant' word or sound. 2. Expressive in an eminent degree; forcible. 3. Expressive or suggestive of something more than what appears; full of meaning; as, to give a person a 'significant' look. 4. Betokening something; representative of something; standing as a sign of something. 5. In mathematics, denoting figures standing for numbers.
- (2) B. Russell, Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, London, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 162.

- (3) Ibid., p. 124.
- (4) C.f. Chapter 1, Section 1.53.
- (5) Morton White, Toward Reunion in Philosophy, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, p. 36.
- (6) L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, (trans. by Pears and McGuinness), London, Runtledge, 1961, p. ix. There is considerable controversy about the interpretation of the purpose and scope of Logical Atomism. (For a discussion of the "logical" and "psychological" interpretation of the Tractatus, see Inquiry, Winter 1964, Vol. 7, No. 4.) On the "epistemological" and "linguistic" interpretations of Russell's Logical Atomism, see the controversy between Mr. P. Buchtarov ("On an Alleged Mistake of Logical Atomism", Analysis 19.6 (1959), pp. 132ff.) and Mr. S. Shoemaker ("Logical Atomism and Language", Analysis 20.3 (1960).) My thesis in Chapter 4 is independent of these controversies. I am not setting out to defend any view, I am merely trying to point out that the 'use' theory of meaning has certain difficulties. However, certain psychological-epistemological interpretations of significant or meaningful form part of my overall argument.
- (7) In Feigl & Sellers Readings in Philosophical Analysis, (op. cit.), p. 103.
- (8) For a discussion of "logical intuition", see Professor Tennessen's articles, e.g., "What Should we Say?", Inquiry, Vol. 2, 1959, pp. 265ff.
- (9) In the article cited above (8), Professor Tennessen also deals with "intuition" into ordinary language.
- (10) B. Russell, "Mr. Strawson on Referring", Mind, 1957, p. 385ff.
- (11) "On Denoting" in Feigl & Sellars, p. 113.
- (12) Feigl & Sellars, p. 103.
- (13) B. Russell, Problems of Philosophy, London, William and Norgate, 1912, p. 91.
- (14) Even in "On Denoting" he implies that the "constituents" are the meanings, c.f. note (11) above.
- (15) D.O. Hebb, Introduction to Psychology, W.B. Saunders, 1958, p. 48.
- (16) H.H. Price, Thinking and Representation, Henrietta Hertz Foundation, p. 3.

- (17) M. Lazerowitz, "The Existence of Universals", Mind, 1946, p. 1ff.
- (18) G. Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning" in Max Black, The Importance of Language, (op cit.), pp. 162ff. See note (25) of the Introduction.
- (19) D.F. Pears, "Universals", in A. Flew, Logic and Language, (Second Series), Oxford, Blackwell, 1953, p. 51ff.
- (20) R.I. Aaron, "The Rational and the Empirical" in Contemporary British Philosophy (Third Series), London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 1.
- (21) in E.G. Boring, A History of Experimental Psychology, Appleton-Century-Crofts, N.Y., 1957, p. 442ff.
- (22) Ibid, p. 444.
- (23) John Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy, London, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1957, p. 184. Almost exactly the same thing is expressed in A. Meinong, The Theory of Objects, in R. Chisolm, Realism and the Background of Phenomenology, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1960, p. 79.
- (24) Passmore, p. 192.
- (25) L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus, (3.326 In order to recognize a symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense. 3.328 If a sign is useless, it is meaningless.)
- (26) G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33", Mind, January 1954, pp. 6-7.
- (27) C.I. Lewis "Experience and Meaning" in Feigl & Sellars Readings, p. 128ff.
- (28) M. Schlick, "Meaning and Verification" in Feigl & Sellars (op. cit.), p. 147-148.
- (29) G. Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning" in Max Black The Importance of Language, Spectrum Books, 1962, p. 161.
- (30) Ibid., p. 167.
- (31) Ibid., p. 162.
- (32) Gustav Bergmann, Meaning and Existence, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1960, pp. 3ff.
- (33) Ibid., pp. 17ff.

- (34) in Black The Importance of Language, p. 162.
- (35) H.H. Price, Thinking and Representation, Henrietta Hertz Foundation, p. 9.

Chapter III

- (1) In "On Denoting" in Feigl and Sellers, Readings in Philosophical Analysis, (op. cit.), p. 107.
- (2) P.T. Geach, "Russell's Theory of Descriptions", Analysis, 1949, p. 84ff.
- (3) P.F. Strawson, Introduction to Logical Theory, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952, p. 175.
- (4) I am very grateful to Professor Tennessen for allowing me to use these examples from an unpublished paper.
- (5) In "On Referring" in Flew (op. cit.), p. 35.
- (6) L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, Basic & Blackwell, 1953, p. 11e.
- (7) "On Referring" in Flew (op. cit.) p.30.
- (8) I.M. Bochenski, "The Problem of Universals", University of Notre Dame Press, 1956, p. 33f.

Chapter IV

- (1) in A. Flew, Essays in Conceptual Analysis, pp. 25 & 31.
- (2) Ibid., p. 30.
- (3) Ibid., p. 32.
- (4) Ibid., p. 40.
- (5) Ibid., p. 44.
- (6) Ibid., p. 45.
- (7) See Introduction, note (1).
- (8) See Chapter 2, Section 2.25.

- (9) C.p. John Hospers, Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1953, Ch. 1, pp. 25-64.
- (10) Tennessen, H., in conversation.
- (11) L.W. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1953, p. 20e.
- (12) G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33", Mind, January 1954, pp. 6-7.
- (13) C.p. Hospers, p. 39ff.
- (14) P. Butchvarov, "Meaning-as-Use and Meaning-as-Correspondence", Philosophy, Vol. XXXV, 1960, p. 318.
- (15) F. Waismann, "Verifiability" in Flew, Logic and Language, (First Series), pp. 120ff.
- (16) Richard M. Gale, C. Douglas McGee, Frank A. Tillman, 'Ryle on "Use", "Usage" and "Utility"', Philosophical Studies, Vol. XV, June 1964, No. 4, pp. 57ff. The authors make the point that Ryle may still be dominated by the ghost of a logical calculus and I think this may be true for Strawson also.
- (17) Ibid., Flew, p. 52.
- (18) Paul Marhenke, "The Criterion of Significance" in L. Linsky, Semantics and the Philosophy of Language, The University of Illinois Press, 1952, p. 139.
- (19) R. Harre, Introduction to the Logic of Science, London, MacMillan, 1960, p. 4.
- (20) J.L. Evans, "Meaning and Verification", Mind, January 1953, p. 9.
- (21) D. Mitchell, Introduction to Logic, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1962, p. 101.
- (22) Gilbert Ryle "Ordinary Language", Philosophical Review, April 1953, Vol. LXII, p. 167ff.
- (23) Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Library of Liberal Arts Press, 1958, p. 38 ff.
- (24) Samuel Butler, "Thought and Language" in Max Black The Importance of Language, Prentice Hall, N.J., 1962, p. 13ff.

- (25) A.M. MacIver, "The Instrumentality of Language", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LXII, 1961, pp. 19-20.
- (26) B. Malinowski, "The Language of Magic," in Max Black (ed.) The Importance of Language, Prentice-Hall Inc., N.J., 1962, pp. 72ff. Malinowski claims that in primitive societies there are two "uses" of language--the pragmatic and the magical.
- (27) C.f., reference in note (14) above.
- (28) C.f., reference in note (20) above.
- (29) C.f., Ryle in "Ordinary Language", note (22) above.
- (30) C.f., Ryle "The Theory of Meaning" in Max Black, The Importance of Language, p. 147ff. Ryle calls it the "Fido"-Fido theory.
- (31) P.F. Strawson, "On Referring", note (1) above.
- (32) C.f. Ryle (29) pp. 160ff. Also in "Ordinary Language" (note (22) above). He says: We are accustomed to talk of the use of safety-pins, bannisters, table-knives, badges and gestures; and this familiar idiom neither connotes nor seems to connote any queer relations to any queer entities. (p. 172.)
- (33) G. Ryle, Concept of Mind, (passim), and Robert Thomson, The Psychology of Thinking, Penguin, 1963, p. 204.
- (34) "Ordinary Language", Philosophical Review, 1953, p. 173.
- (35) I. Gulhaag, Knowledge, Truth and Reality, Vol. 1, Institute for Social Research, Oslo, 1961, p. 39. (for private circulation only)
- (36) R.S. Woodworth, Contemporary Schools of Psychology, N.Y., Ronald Press, 1951. Woodworth criticizes behaviorist theory of language.
- (37) M. Black, Language and Philosophy, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1949, pp. 187ff.
- (38) H.H. Price, Thinking and Representation, p. 14 and passim.
- (39) John Hospers, Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, Prentice Hall, N.J., 1953, p. 177ff., also "What is Explanation?" in Flew Essays in Conceptual Analysis.
- (40) Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science, Harcourt, N.Y., 1961, pp. 15-26.

- (41) N.R. Hanson, Patterns of Discovery, Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 50ff.
- (42) Webster's Twentieth-Century Dictionary: Explain - To make plain, manifest, or intelligible; to clear of obscurity; to expound; to illustrate by discourse or by notes; as, to 'explain' an example; to 'explain' the reason a body falls. Also J. Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy, London, Duckworth, 1957, p. 176, Psychological Genetic explanations.
- (43) Margaret Boden, The Paradox of Explanation, Aristotelian Society, Vol. LXII, 1961-62, p. 159.
1. One may want to argue that the analogy between words and tools is only illustrative. This weaker claim is perhaps more supportable than the more audacious one that I will consider (explanatory). But it too, in any case, suffers from the drastic criticism that it is difficult to understand how it illustrates or what it illustrates. It seems that one may apply the same arguments against the claim as an illustration as one does against the claim that it is an explanation.
 2. It should be noticed that the problem, How are sentences significant? is not explained by analogy in the same way as, How do gases flow? In the latter case a structural analogy with water is sufficient. In the former this cannot be sufficient.
 3. Perhaps the Paradox of Analogies that suggests itself in this chapter may be best illustrated by the statement "A human being is like a machine". Now if you choose a very simple machine it is obvious that a human being is not like it, even structurally. If the machine becomes more and more complicated until it becomes indistinguishable from a human, then, of course, this machine itself has to be explained. In the case of "meaning" it may be suggested by this paradox that no analogy can explain how words mean.
 4. Many analogies are successful for two reasons: (1) they are used for a structural comparison, (2) they are used merely to suggest possible research.
- (44) H. Tennessen, "On Worthwhile Hypotheses", Inquiry, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 183-198.
- (45) L.J. Cohen, 'On the Use of "the use of"', Philosophy, January 1955.
- (46) Philosophical Investigations, Remark 66.
- (47) Philosophical Investigations, Remark 67. One may want to conclude from this section that it is entirely trivial to say that words are used and intend that this should help in explicating "meaning" or "significance". For if everything

can be used then nothing is explicable by saying that some particular thing is used. It may be true that words are used but this is as trivial as saying, Whatever is, is. Similarly we may claim that to say that words are tools is quite trivial. If whatever is used is a tool, and whatever one does when one uses a tool is "to tool", then "to tool" is a quite vacuous concept. Otherwise it would be possible to explain to a person how a cyclotron works merely by telling him that it is a tool. Similarly one may dissolve the difficulty of how the human brain works by saying that it also is a tool. One may suggest that to say "words are tools" is similarly vacuous. Since one should interpret a theory as liberally as possible, I have decided to select specific examples of tools, ones that are commonly given by ordinary language philosophers. For these I try to show that it is inappropriate to assimilate (to treat as being the same as) hand-tools or chess-pieces to language. Another example, money, suffers from some of the same problems as arise for language. (See also Note (29) of the Introduction.)

- (48) B. Malinowski, "Antropology" in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Supp. Vol. 1, N.Y. and London, 1936, pp. 132-33.
- (49) Talcott Parsons, Essays in Sociological Theory, Glencoe, Ill., 1949, Part 1 (passim).
- (50) Walter B. Cannon, The Wisdom of the Body, N.Y., 1932, Ch. 12.
- (51) D. Mitchell, Introduction to Logic, Hutchinson University Library, 1962, p. 101.
- (52) C.K. Grant, "On Using Language", Philosophical Quarterly, 1956, p. 331.
- (53) Samuel Eutler, "Thought and Language" in Max Black The Importance of Language, (note 24).
- (54) C.f. note 23.
- (55) C.f. note 25.
- (56) Mentioned in Robert Thomson The Psychology of Thinking, Penguin, 1959, p. 164.
- (57) Mentioned in Samuel Butler, "Thought and Language", see note (53), p. 25.
- (58) B.L. Whorf, Language Thought and Reality, ed. J.B. Carroll, M.I.T. Press, 1951.

- (59) in Madelbaum, D.G. (ed.) Selected Writings of Edward Sapir, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1949, p. 162.
- (60) Quoted in "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis" by H. Hoiyer in H. Hoiyer Language in Culture, University of Chicago Press, 1954, p. 94.
- (61) See Introduction 0.65.
- (62) In "Ordinary Language", c.f. note (22).
- (63) This point is also made by J.A. Fodor in "Of Words and Uses", Inquiry 4:190, Autumn 1961. (Professor Tennessen has often made this point in conversation.)
- (64) See note (44).
- (65) C.f. Morton White, Towards Reunion in Philosophy, Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 36.
- (66) C.f., note (34).
- (67) See note (73).
- (68) Robert Thomson, The Psychology of Thinking.
- (69) H.H. Price, Thinking and Representation, Henrietta Hertz Trust (1946), p. 3 and passim.
- (70) Charles Morris, Language Signs and Behavior, Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1938.
- (71) O.H. Mowrer, A Psychologist Looks at Language, American Psychologist, November 1954.
- (72) R.S. Woodworth, Contemporary Schools of Psychology, N.Y., Ronald Press, 1951.
- (73) W. Köhler, The Mentality of Apes, Penguin, 1957.
- (74) Samuel Butler in Max Black, The Importance of Language, p. 27.
- (75) in "Ordinary Language", c.f. note (22) above.
- (76) H.H. Price, Thinking and Representation, p. 5.
- (77) G. Ryle, "The Theory of Meaning" in Max Black, The Importance of Language, p. 168.

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- (14) Gale, R.M., C.D. McGee, F.A. Tillman, 'Ryle on "Use", "Usage", and "Utility"', Philosophical Studies, Vol. XV, June 1964, p. 57ff.
- (15) Geach, P., "Russell's Theory of Descriptions", Analysis, 1949, p. 84.
- (16) Geach, P., "Russell on Meaning and Denoting", Analysis, 19.3, January 1959.

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- (35) Russell, B., "On Denoting" in Feigl, H. & W. Sellars, Readings in Philosophical Analysis, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., 1949, pp. 103ff.
- (36) Russell, B., Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, London, Penguin, 1962.
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